

## Mental Analysis of “Teberri and Tevelli” Concepts in the Qur’an in the Context of the “Other”<sup>30</sup>

Nisa Gecekuşu Demirbaş - Firat University

### INTRODUCTION

The word *teberri* (تبرى) is defined as; to abstain from things disliked, therefore stay away from it, to get away and remain out of trouble in the dictionary. It is derived from the same source of the words *bür* (بُرء) and *bera'* (بَرَاء) (Isfahani, 2012). The opposite of *teberri* is “*tevelli*” (تولى) which means amity and to be connected with affection with each other. It includes the motion of intimacy that rejects a foreigner to enter inside. *Tevelli* is derived from the root “*velâyet*” (ولاية) which means custody, guardianship. The verb “*tevellâ*” means guardianship when it is used in a transitive sense on its own. On the other hand; it means to turn away and to abandon something if it is made transitive with the letter “*min*” (من) literally or figuratively (Isfahani, 2012). When the use of these words is considered in the dictionaries and in the Qur’an in general, it is not possible to find a separatist and exclusionist understanding. Even though Prophet Muhammad’s life and teachings do not have a negative attitude towards the “other”, the events following his death caused individuals and communities within the same religion to exhibit negative attitudes against people who do not share their point of view. *Prima facie*, the *teberri* and the “other” do not belong to same semantic axis; nevertheless, due to schism within the Muslim community and development of attitudes towards people with different ideas, they have become to be synonyms. In this context, problematic of what kind of attitude should develop individuals towards people who belong to the same religion but have different religious understanding inevitably comes to the fore (Kesgin, 2016).

To get to the root of this problem, it is important to define who the “other” concept is, which is the favorite naming of recent times. How concept defines other people is as important as the answer to the question “Who’s who?” in this concept (Nahya, 2011). Turkish word “*öteki*-other” is derived from the word “*öte*-away” which connotes a remote location that is far away from the place where the speaker takes as a reference, a place geographically located far away from the speaker and with respect to the reference point. It should be in the opposite direction

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(Komisyon, 1998.). The “other” concept could be defined as; within the framework of past and today’s relationships, individual, group, social class or community being differentiated and segregated as a class or ethnically from the society or culture. In terms of positioning, there are two opposite poles: “I-We” and “other-other one-someone else”. As a result of this positioning; the “other” in the most basic sense is the result of the action of a differentiation (Nahya, 2011).

The essential element of the concept “teberri-tevelli” and “other”;in spite of being able to be defined in more different ways, is its reflection in the social dimension. The purpose of this study is to focus on the solution processes of this phenomenon, rather than what causes this alienation. In addition, this work strictly refrains from intentions to prioritize or push in to the background of any particular group. Another issue that has been taken care of in this study is to show the past without sanctifying or aggrandizing it. In other words, it is without being denial and condescending; to show a scientific approach.

#### The emergence of the concepts of Teberri and Tevelli

The political events that took place shortly after the Prophet Mohammed’s death gave rise to the fact that Muslims were separated from each other and even hated.<sup>31</sup> As a result of this hate speech; teberri has become one of the systematized beliefs. This belief has undergone some changes over time, finally has become a faith basis of a sect.

When the history of Islamic thought is considered; first of all, it is possible to say that tevelli and teberri methods were first adopted by Kharijites. After the event of arbitration (tahkîm); Urve b. Hudeyr, refusing both sides, announced that he had abandoned both Ali and Muawiyah and repudiated their decisions (For detailed information, see. Bağdâdî, nd). Nonetheless; Naafi b. Ezrak, who is considered as the founder of Ezârîka division of Kharijites, cut off relations with those who refused to fight together with him, saying he refrained from (teberri) them (For detailed information, see. Eş’ari, 1980). It could be said that Kharijites’ understanding of Teberri has a pretty comprehensive framework. They argued that supporters of both sides that had accepted the Referee event, the two arbitrators, two participants in the Battle of the Camel (Cemel), the Caliph Osman, in short, everyone that were not on their side were at “Kufr” (Kufr is the “denial of the Truth” (truth in the form of articles of faith in Islam) (Bağdâdî, nd). Even though Kharijites first used the concept of teberri and tried to spread its usage, it is not possible to say they made the concept the essence of their faith.

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<sup>31</sup>This expression could be considered as an exaggerated approach. However, when we turn the pages of history, we, unfortunately, encounter people with such a mentality that could easily kill Muslims who do not share their own thoughts.

One of the sects that frequently use *tevelli* and *teberri* method is Shia sect.<sup>32</sup> *Tevelli* and *teberri* concepts that Shia used in connection with his own idea of structure, they were shaped by discussion Imamate which centered on the problem of who was to be chosen as the successor of the Prophet Mohammed after his death. Imamate (إمامة) means “leadership” and is an important concept in Shia theology. According to Shia, The Imams are the spiritual and political successors to Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam.<sup>33</sup> Martyrdom of Ali ((Muhammad’s son-in-law) by the Kharijites, Hassan’s giving up the Caliphate to Muawiyah due to period’s conditions and finally, Hussein’s martyrdom at Karbala resulted in formation of love and sympathy for the Ahl al-Bayt ( a phrase meaning, literally, “People of the House” or “Family of the House” and designated in Islam for the holy family of the Prophet Muḥammad, particularly his daughter Fatimah, her husband Ali and their descendants) during that period in some sectors within the Islamic community. Consisting a core belief principle of Shia; the thought of *tevelli-teberri* is inspired by love and affection for Ali and his descendants (Dündar, 2017). Initially, *tevelli* was to love Ali and following his path; *teberri* was to refrain from Ali’s enemies and from those who usurped caliphate of Ali. However, later understanding of *tevelli* and *teberri* has been extended to include Ali’s family members and the Imams who are descendants of Ali. In fact, the Shia Imamiyya further expanded the area of its *teberri*; the first three Caliphs, Aisha and those who opposed Ali in the Camel War, those who supported Muawiyah’s forces in the Battle of Siffin, two umpires that arbitrated between two parties, Khārijites that fought against Ali and their supporters. In case of practical impossibility of *teberri* due to current circumstances, they recommended to bear enmity against those people (For detailed information, see. Öz, 2011).

Shia at first adopted *teberri* as a political attitude, later to give the concept a religious dimension by integrating it into fundamental principles of Islam. At the first stage of adoption of *teberri* as a religious principle, *tevelli* was used together with it. Afterwards; they were put forward as two separate principals (Öz, 2011). Consequently, Shia and Khārijites’ usage of these two concepts does not match up with Qur’an; because, these concepts never appeared in the same way anywhere in the Qur’an.

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<sup>32</sup>These concepts, which are closely related to Shia’s theory of imamate, have accepted by all Shiite group been, it was chosen to call them generally Shia regardless of its branches. It goes that which is indicated is mainly the Shia Imamiyya, which is the largest branch that lives today.

<sup>33</sup>According to Shia’s understanding of imamate, Ali was appointed as Imam by the Prophet with the clear and strong certainty. I.e. Ali’s imamate is fixed with the explicit provision. Furthermore this leadership is not only limited to Ali, in the absence of any obstacle, it is descendable to his lineage. According to them, imams are protected from large and small sins. Because the imamate is an essential element of religion, its importance prevents it to be chosen by the society. Şehristani, 1995.)

### Utilization of concepts of Teberri and Tevellî in the Holy Qur'an.

Throughout Qur'an, the words teberri (Bakarah, 2:166, 167, 205; Taubah, 9:114; Qasas, 28:63; Mumtahanah, 60:8) and tevellâ (Bakarah, 2:205; Âl 'Imrân, 3:23; Nisâ', 4:80, 115; A 'râf, 7:79, 93, 196; Yûsuf, 12:84; Tâ-hâ, 20:48, 60; Nûr, 24:11, 47; Qasas, 28:24; Dhâriyât, 51:39; Najm, 53:29, 33; Ma 'ârij, 70:17; Qiyâmah, 75:32; 'Abasa, 80:1; Ghâshiyah, 88:23; Lail, 92:16; 'Alaq, 96:13) appear with different derivations of their word roots. Rather than addressing each one of these verses one by one, it would be more useful to draw general principles from the verses. When the meanings used in these verses are considered, teberri is generally mentioned in terms of creativity, to connote staying away from positioning any idol in an equal basis with Allah and avoiding into the darkness of Kufr. On the axis of the Prophet Muhammad, it is used to refer to him staying away from his opponents, and his adversaries staying away from him. The important matter that demands attention in verses' utilization is that all of them use the concepts according to their lexical meanings. If generalization is conducted from the verses, the common point is avoiding to be in the same stage with the enemies of Allah (in the context of faith), getting out of the treaties and alliances of the unbelievers and refraining from the things that the Qur'an accepted as superstitious (Dundar, 2017) These narratives in no way mean an ontological remoteness. They draw attention to what appropriate behavior should be when the "other" exhibit behaviors that do not conform to the divine and humanitarian values.

Although tevellâ (turning away from) in each one of the Koranic verses is mentioned in a sense to break off relations with people in the form of behavioral sense, there is no narrative in which Allah turns away from an entity. *"So remind, [O Muhammad]; you are only a reminder. You are not over them a controller. However, he who turns away and disbelieves, then Allah will punish him with the greatest punishment."* (Ghâshiyah, 88:21-24) It is emphasized in the verse that conscious actions one makes with his/her own choice will be given not in this world, but in the afterlife.

Qur'an's narrative on whom should be chosen as a friend, what will happen to those who have chosen wrong company or people or situations that need to be refrained from does not address any particular person, group or community as in the case in the interpretations of Shia and the Kharijites. The emerging issues of in-politics origin, to haul in the platform of religion and discuss them within a religious context are a lost racing from the beginning.

### Mental Analysis of Alienation from the perspective of Qur'an and Islam

Alienation is not only a matter of modern days but as mentioned above, is rather a phenomenon in progress that began really long times ago. In the past, the phenomenon used to be called “teberri”, today it is conceptualized as alienation. Qualitative differences found that these two concepts are very natural, considering the constantly changing world we live in; because the times, places and communities are all changing phenomena. Also, it is inevitable for concepts to undergo some changes over time.

It could be said that the “other” existed as a concept in a considerable way in the region where Islam emerged and developed, as the other great religions mentioned in the Qur'an and Muslims in Medina shared the same environment personally and thus, kept touch with them. The early Muslims were communicating with other religions before the Hegira (“Migration” or “Emigration”, the Prophet Muhammad's migration (622 CE) from Mecca to Medina in order to escape persecution). However, it would be more appropriate to start the relationship of Muslims with the other from the Medina era; because it is the period of Madinah that Muslims gained political power. The relationship of a politically weak society with the other is very difficult to handle in a healthy way. Because at that time, the structure of society was not suitable to handle this relationship. Muslims in the Medina era, in their approach to the “Other”, followed a peaceful way without giving any concession on religious matters. No exclusionary attitude was taken against them as long as no attacks came from the other groups. When they dishonored their commitments, the appropriate response was given.

Qur'an identified Islam as the only truth. Although there are no validities of the falsified and superstitious religions in the eyes of Allah, the Holy Creator has not adopted the attitude of ignoring them. In other words, the Qur'an is communicating with the other without resorting to exclusion (Çalışkan, 2007). *Indeed, those who have believed and those who were Jews and the Sabeans and the Christians and the Magians and those who associated with Allah - Allah will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection. Indeed Allah is, over all things, Witness* (Hajj, 22:17). The inclusion of the religions as a truth in this verse is an important issue in terms of addressing the people or groups coming to today from the aftermath of Prophet Muhammad, accepted as “other” or considered as those whom should be stayed away. Another remarkable point about this issue is that, although the Qur'an is the only reality, the names given to others are never insulting. However, when the Islamic thought tradition is considered, deprecatory and derisive nomenclature by the sects for their opponents is frequently encountered.

There are many contrasts that regulate our relationship between We and the other such as: local-foreign, rich-poor, one of us-one of them, male-female, free-slave, traditional-

innovative (Schnapper, 2005). In classifications made according to these criteria, the other always represents the empty side of the glass. While the full side of the glass never wishes the glass half-empty to be filled, due to the desire of crushing and self-satisfaction. This case shows where the egocentric person wishes to position other people. Elements, perceptions, objects, and phenomena that are described as bad, malice, evil are put on the “other” using a very simple reflection. As a result, groups and communities from many segments of the society that desired to be kept at a distance are ontologically being pushed to the periphery (Yavuz, 2006).

Theological groups usually seek to disable another group while trying to ensure their own realities. Because; according to their acceptance, controlling reality will only be possible with controlling thoughts. In this perspective, the others, although there are not large differences in the theological sense, could sometimes swiftly be labeled as Ahl-i Bid’ah ((أهل-ahl) literally means the people. In Islam bid’ah (Arabic: بدعة; English: innovation)) refers to innovation in religious matters) (Yeşilyurt, 2004). The attitude of people looking at the same teachings from different angles to ignore their opponents’, which they position as the “other”, thoughts completely, to avoid them to be discussed no matter of what, even for purposes of criticism, is the best indication of misinterpretation of the divine message. Because; due to this attitude, a lot of functional thought that may be very original and creative are condemned to be set aside without being able to enter into the field, like a baby being aborted before birth. This attitude, which does not recognize the other’s right to life, is a futile endeavor, which results in making the other irrelevant in order to protect and defend themselves under the protection of traditionalist approaches (Yeşilyurt, 2004).

In terms of theology’s aspect, which faces human being, development and maintenance of a positive and moderate form of communication between me and the other, is an important way of ensuring and protecting personal integrity. This is an important factor that requires interaction and consideration before ignoring what is happening around us. (Yeşilyurt, 2004). In other words, it is not possible for an individual to live only as “me”. It is imperative that the individual allow for the possibility of experiencing someone else in order to be able to continue his/her life in the society.

One of the most important reasons for alienating others is the prejudices that the individual or society has. For this reason, it is possible to talk about a very close relationship between the alienation and the prejudice. Prejudices could be defined as judgments that individuals or society have created for others, as well as our thoughts about a person we do not know or whom we do not associate in our own world of thought and living universe. From this point of view, it could be said that prejudices actually come to fruition as a result of an alienation

process. This alienation could be perceived as a total rejection of the value system of a person who happens to be in our axis of prejudgment. In short, prejudices are in fact a form of perception built on the negativity of the other (Ulađlı, 2018). Starting on an individual basis, prejudices may evolve into social prejudgments. In this respect, the other, whatever he/she does, cannot come out of the mold on which the other side has put him/her in, he/she is always the other.

One of the most important approaches to the other is the tendency to decide in this world on other's prospects in the afterlife. Since I represent the right side, the other must always be portrayed as the one who is condemned to suffer the atrocities. Even God is the God of "I". For this reason, even the thought of God helping the "other", in need of assistance, who has had a difficult time, is not accepted (Yeşilyurt, 2004).

Although the approach for the "other" is considered to be more moderate in the modern world, the situation is not so different from the past. People refuse even to share the same living space with the people that they put into the other class, cannot stand the difference and cannot tolerate people who think differently from themselves (Tan, 2015).

No matter what is said about Islam, the ultimate aim of both the traditional sciences and the theologies as well as the contemporary theologies is ultimately to make its divine message understandable (Yeşilyurt, 2004). In this case, the first question that comes to mind is what kind of a portrait the Qur'an draws for the "other". The best answer to alienation is originally given by revelation. The Qur'an responds to the existential/ontological alienation from the past with qualitative (blasphemy, discord) alienation (Yavuz, 2006). The Qur'an does not position existence as being down or up in an ontological sense. The factor that extols or reduces the creatures is the ability to understand and practice the divine message. In other words, human beings could only be positioned according to the relationship with their creators. Me's superiority to the other is only centered on the taqwa (piety)(Yavuz, 2006). Indeed "*O mankind, We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.*"(Hujurât, 49:13). The point discussed in this verse is a good example.

## Conclusion and Discussion

The problems faced today are not actually the things that have been faced for the first time. Although they are not exactly the same, they continue with different versions of the past. The difference is that only with the change of times, location, society and conditions, the

occurrence, development and shape of events evolve. The problematic of our communication with the other is one of those ancient matters. Although the relationship with someone else is handled in connection with people; in fact, this situation has indirectly turned into an effort to determine the relationship with Allah. After Prophet Muhammad's death, Muslims have developed better relationships with members of other religions in the course of history, but unfortunately, they have not shown the same success with the people with whom they share the same religion. Individuals in the name of sectarianism were separated into different categories and forced to be drifted out of society. However, it is never acceptable for societies that speak the same language and have the same cultural attributes to see themselves superior or different from the others. The tendency of the side that deems itself as superior and the other side as innately inferior/slavery is completely against the universal principles of the Qur'an. The Qur'an has clearly demonstrated its principles of *tevelli* and *teberri*. For this reason, it is impossible to establish positive relations in Muslim society by glorifying, defending and justifying alienating behavior. Those who are farthest to our views must not be regarded as the most worthless in value. For constructing a healthy future, the Qur'an's human-centered perspective should guide social relations.

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