A phono-Pragmatic Analysis of Rhythm in the Qura'nic text of Pleasant Scenes

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Abstract

This study sheds light on the role of rhythm in the manifestation of meaning particularly during the recitation of the glorious Quran verses. Rhythm in the Qura'nic text has a phonologically distinctive role. It imposes a great impact on Arabs who understand it deeply. It is a linguistic and pragmatic (rhetoric) phenomenon evoking the Arab listener when hearing the recitation of the glorious Qur'an by a well-efficient and authorized reciter.

1. The Concept of Rhythm

Crystal (1990:307) defines rhythm, in its general sense, as a phonological term referring to the regularly received prominent units in speech. These regularities may be stated in terms of patterns of stressed vs. unstressed syllables, syllables length (long vs. short) or pitch (high vs. low) or some combination of these variable composing maximally regular patterns.

Spoken English words with two or more syllables have different stress and length patterns. Some syllables are stressed more than others and some syllables are pronounced longer than others. The same is true of phrases and sentences. Different words in a sentence have stronger stress and are pronounced longer and other words are weaker and shorter. This pattern of strong and weak and long pronunciation gives English its rhythm and harmony.

Rhythm actually is timing patterns among syllables. However, the timing patterns are not the same in all languages. There are particularly two opposite types of rhythm in languages: stress-timed and syllable-timed. According to Mackay (1985: 117) stress-timed rhythm is determined by stressed syllables, which occur at regular intervals of time, with an uneven and changing number of unstressed syllables between them; syllable-timed rhythm is based on the total number of syllables since each syllable takes approximately the same amount of time.

The stress-timed rhythm theory states that the time from each stressed syllable to the next will tend to be the same, irrespective of the number of intervening unstressed syllables. The theory also claims that while some languages (e.g. Russian and Arabic) have stress-timed rhythm similar to that of English (Roach, 1983:103).

Since English is a stressed time language, speakers try to make the amount of time to say something the same between the stressed syllables. If there are three or four unstressed syllable between the stressed syllables, the unstressed syllables will be spoken faster, so that the speaker can keep the rhythm. Also, in order to keep the rhythm, if there are no unstressed syllable between stressed syllables, the
stressed syllables are stretched out of space equally. The time it takes to say something in English depends on the number of stressed syllables, not the number of syllables.

English words can be composed of one or more syllables. In all words of two or more syllables, one syllable i.e. the stressed syllable is stronger than the others of the unstressed syllables. Thus, the combination of stressed and unstressed syllables helps to create the word rhythm in English, which displays an alternate change in strength, length and pitch of syllables.

Gilbert (1993: 40) has explained that why the syllable stress so important in English. When he says "the stress is important because English speakers appear to store vocabulary with stress patterns, so a stress mistake can throw a conversation off track, especially if the speaker's control of English vowel sounds is uncertain".

Therefore, the more frequently speakers misuse stress, the more effort listeners have to make to understand what is said. Words that have the most stress in English are called content words. Content words are usually the nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and pronouns (demonstrative, possessive, reflexive and interrogative). These words are important to express the main meaning of the sentence. Function words on the other hand are those words that are weaker and shorter. They include auxiliary verbs, prepositions, conjunctions, determiners and possessive adjectives. These words are less important in expressing the meaning of the sentence.

Roach (1983: 102) says that "the theory that English has stress-timed rhythm implies that stressed syllables will tend to occur at relatively regular intervals whether they are separated by unstressed syllables or not". In the following example, one can note that the content words (in bold) are stressed more (pronounced louder) than the functions words:

-Where are you going after lunch?
-Football is my absolute favourite game.

Some writers have developed theories of English rhythm in which a unit of rhythm, the foot (the rhythmic unit), is used (with no obvious parallel in the metrical analysis of text); the foot (rhythmic unit) begins with a stressed syllable and includes all following unstressed syllables up to (but not including) the following stressed syllables. So, the examples sentences given above would be divided into feet as follows:

-Where are you | going | after lunch?
-Football is my absolute | favourite | game.

The stressed syllables differ from unstressed ones in three features: loudness, length and pitch. Each feature is indispensable in the production of word rhythm in English. Stressed syllables are not only louder but also longer and higher-pitched than unstressed syllables. Vowels in unstressed syllables are also reduced so as to make the syllable shorter.
Dauer (1993: 95) explains that just as most words have stressed and unstressed syllables, and so do sentences. Sentence rhythm, like word rhythm, is created by an alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables.

This idea may be seen obviously when Grant (1993: 98) says that "if you have a tendency to stress every word and syllable equally, you might sound abrupt, angry, adamant or impatient without intending to". On the other hand, if one fails to show which words are stressed or unstressed, the listener will probably have difficulty understanding the meaning of the sentence due to the lack of clear stressed words. Without proper stress in a sentence, the meaning is impaired. As Brown and Huckin (1987: 54) has pointed out "it is precisely such overuse and misuse of stress that produce the foreign-sounding speech rhythms that make speech comprehension difficult".

Stress of this kind constitutes a reality for the speaker, but is not, by itself an efficient means of communicating accent in connected speech. Nevertheless, the syllables uttered with the greatest stress constitute to form a rhythm group (Gimson, 1975: 260).

From this explanation one can say that it is noticeable that the rhythmic beats of an utterance occur at fairly equal intervals of time which is called 'rhythmic unit'. O'Connor (1965: 34) has shown that "even when a speaker is deliberately attempting to produce isochrony in doggerel verse the real durations of groups vary and that is a listener's perception of equality of intervals between stimuli allows for considerable latitude."

As a result of this, the speed at which the unstressed syllables are uttered and the length of each will depend upon the number occurring between two strong beats. All the unaccented syllables occurring between two strong beats may not, however, be uttered with equal rapidity those following the strong beat of a rhythmic group tend to occupy slightly more time than those which precede the strong beat. O'Connor (1968: 56) sees that "the duration of the foot in relation to the number of component sound segments. In a constant frame with a variable item having different numbers of segments, the frame items do not accommodate to the length of the variable".

The rhythmic grouping of unaccented syllables generally correlates with grammatical word-clusters; a rhythmic division will not normally fall within a word pattern, but several words may combine to form one rhythmic unit. Sometimes one speaks rhythmically. This is typical of some styles of public speaking while at other tones one speaks a rhythmically that is without a rhythm when one is hesitant or nervous.

Grant (1993: 105) applies the rhythm of rhymes to that of ordinary sentences. One may say the sentences with correct rhythm without too much effort. Rhymes always show clear rhythm in language. In order to say an English rhyme well, one
should stress certain words and weaken (reduce) others. This may help the reader to acquire its natural rhyme easily. This may be seen in the following example:

-Jack and Jill went up the hill,
-To fetch a pail of water;
-Jack fell down and broke his crown,
-And Jill came tumbling after.

One needs to know where to pause in sentences when saying or reading a text aloud. If pauses are not put in the right places, the listener will have difficulty processing the meaning of sentences, even if the individual words are pronounced well. So, one should know how to pause properly. The key point is to find thought group.

Dauer (1993: 95) offers some treatment of pausing, which is very helpful in guiding anyone to pause. Knowledge of English grammar and of the meaning of a text are necessary to figure out where to pause. Pauses may occur before punctuation marks, before conjunctions and between grammatical units such as phrases, clauses and sentences.

However, not everyone pauses or groups words in the same place. The most important thing is that the speaker’s pausing must be able to guide the listener to follow his meaning or thought. Also, a thought group is a rhyme group. It must contain at least one stressed syllable in English. One can put a single vertical line (│) between thought group to know the meaning of the sentence. This may be seen in the following example:

Mary made an appointment I with the dentist I on Monday.

One can say that the concept of rhythm in English may be noticed seen from the repetition of stressed and unstressed syllables in any sentence. This repetition may lead to form a rhythmic unit. This rhythmic unit may have a certain effect on the listener. This thing was first observed by G.R. Firth who produced the prosody theory and he is considered as the pioneer in this theory. Later this theory was adopted by many of his scholars such as O’Connor, Gimson and Roach.

2. Rhythm in Arabic

Before talking about the meaning of rhythm, it is worth noting that one has to explore this term in the language lexicons in Ibn-Manżur’s "Lisan 'Ul-Arab" (2003, 374) in which he mentions the verb "drop" the root of its noun (lqáá) 'rhythm'. 'Dropped: to drop, dropped, dropping':

In this regard, Al-Khalil names one of his books a(Rhetoric Book) which deals with this subject.

Az-Zamakhshary(1960) also mentions the verb drop 'To drop on the ground, to be dropped, I drop it' which is the fine sound made in reading.

The rhythm has taken the meaning of cadence achieved by rhythm. Ibn-Manżur mentions that 'rhythm is from the melody and singing, it also composes music'.

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So rhythm holds in its essence from the sound of cadence. This cadence is related to melody. Yet these two terms have a great importance to the subject of the research. It is, therefore, helpful to mention the linguistic meanings of both of them in the lexicons as mentioned in Lissan 'Ul-Arab that 'I heard the sound of the bird. This sound is produced by the birds' beaks when they break something.

Az-Zamakhshary (1960:476) adds that 'We hear neither cadence nor whisper, both are soothing sounds. I heard the birds' cadence which is the sound of their pecking'.

It seems that the perceptible concept of cadence has different meanings as mentioned before signifying the soft and strong sound. From this concept cadence can be used for inciting the camel. At the same time it is the sound of speech. one can see that cadence also takes the meaning of rhythm. As-Salami (1980:216) states that "The cadence is not an absolute sound. Sound has cadence and this cadence is its echo. rhythm is the cadence within the cadent thing". Ibn-Manżur (2003, 635) defines rhythm differently. He provides the following definitions 'rhythm is the hidden sound', 'rhythm is the fine sound' or 'rhythm is the cadence of the word in reading'.

It seems that rhythm in language is the optimal sound and cadence. Sound has its own cadence and the cadence has its own rhythm. Thus one can say that rhythm is the cadence by which any sound may be rhythmmed (As-Salami 1980:216).

As rhythm means making a sound as mentioned above, cadence is an echo for the sound and rhythm is a fine cadence. One can say also that rhythm is a sound, cadence and melody in speech sequence are the echo of the sound that knocks the ear and find the sound nice or repellent.

2.1 Rhythm as a Phonological Term

The system of rhythm can be seen clearly in music, poetry, prose and dancing. Wahba and Kamel (1984.71) argue that these arts have a system and order which can be made by conformity, sequence and connection. It seems that the conception of rhythm is the fine sound made in reading.

According to Az-Zaidi (1985:137) who sees that connecting rhythm is the fine sound made in reading with general pragmatic (rhetoric) use. One of the reasons that led to the mystery of this conception is the systematic succession of syllables. similarly the system of heart beats is included within this concept. This phonological phenomenon reflects the succession system in human and universal phenomena and the rhythm represented by organized pattern with the highest degrees of order. This was confirmed by Az-Zaidi (1985:137) who sees that 'the rhythm drew their attention'. Rhythm is an aspect of beauty which brings calm, relief and it is the harmony of universal phenomena in movement, stability, feeling and awareness.

The Arab researchers have realized the strong bond between the musical harmony and the order of the movement of the human body and nature. The human body has fast harmonized movements such as breathing which includes
expiration and inhalation or almost slow movements like the sequence of hunger and satisfaction, sleep and wakefulness. (Zakariyya, 1956:20).

The deep delicate understanding and function of rhythm has its impact psychologically. Although predecessors found this impact and pleasure produced from harmony in poetry and prosaic, they found that the Glorious Qur'an surpasses this impact. They couldn't find the guidance in order to know the reason behind such relief.

Al-Khaṭṭabbi (D. 788 A. H.) (1975, 84) points out that nothing can be compared with the Glorious Qur'an in its rhythmicality and harmony. This is the effect of rhythm which Al-Khattabbi mentioned depending on the Quranic text, in his discovery. This indicates that the concept of rhythm is very clear and undeniable in the Glorious Qur'an which made Al-Khaṭṭabbi assert and recognize it indicating the concept of harmony, its influence and function.

2.2 The Function of the Quranic Rhythm

Rhythm and its patterns in the Quranic text is the result of the interrelatedness of all language levels. The significance of rhythm is in fact based on the linguistic relationship between the word utterance and its meaning. Such concomitant leads to a relation between language and thoughts as reflected by binding cause and effect (Mubarak: 1993, 28).

Rhythm as a phonological feature contributes in preparing a formal structure having an impact on the recipient. This phonological feature leads therefore to a precise understanding of the context of the text that holds implications making it close to the general meaning of the text.

So, Al-Qulaibi (1984, 494) points out that the beauty of rhythm in Quranic texts accord with the melody and scene that verses express in various frames of internal musicality. Wherever rhythm exists, it enters directly in composing functional significance in the course. Rhythm takes part in the process of revealing the meaning and verification.

The vital role of rhythm is not restrained to producing significant and arranged phonological units, clarifying them and detecting the meaning only, but it enters in the process of fining a text to sublime it to the peak of artistic beauty. Rhythm has the basics and elements that make the Quranic text entirely a unique text unfamiliar to the Arab one at the time of its revelation.

To identify the important and great role that rhythm plays is to determine the significant function of the text and the range of accord and accomplishment with events and views. One has to put down topics specialized in studying the views in the Quranic text independently to clarify the role of harmony in each view and its part in generating the significance functions which could characterize these views. Rhythm bears the connotation and it is strong inspired powerful impact. It gains this strength by the organized divisions of the clause and by repeating the expressions and the strength of the intervals.
2.3 The Phono-pragmatic Analysis of Rhythm in Pleasant Scenes

Discussion

Scenes of pleasant is connected tidily to scene of hell where one can see a clear comparison between them so much in the Qura'nic verse. As the Glorious Qura'an describes the fire in a scene of pain and what sort of punishing apparatus prepared. Meanwhile, the paradise is described as a scene of pleasant and what sort of pleasant is waiting for those righteous believers. The word paradise is repeated in the Glorious Qura'an more than (120) verse. So, it is considered the safe and last residence for the believers.

The rhythm of pleasant scene is characterized commonly by its calmness and staidness and its musical availability. It is a musical harmony coordinates pleasant and happiness environment and the comfort given to those believers. One can also notice easy pronunciation and its generation in imagining these scenes where the pronunciation is characterized by their cadence. This cadence is characterized by its flexible and soft far away of hardness and violence.

External pauses in verses of paradise plays a significant role in preparing rhythmic units. Mostly, these pauses end with sounds owing a high resonance such as the nasal sounds of (/m/ and /n/) and a long elongating sounds such as /a:/.

Most pleasant scenes including the believers are a lot and have great benefits as a reward for their doings. These scenes probably coined by musical harmony of methodical indications having a great influence in showing the meanings and making it clear. This may be seen in:

َّ إِنَّ الْمُتَّقُينَ فِي ظَلَٰلٍ وَعُيُونٍ ٤١ ۛ وَفَوَاكِهٍ مَا يَشْتَهُونَ ٤٢ ۛ كُلُواٰ وَاشْرَبُواٰ هَنِيئًاٰ ۛ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ٤٣ ۛ إِنَّ كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَٰٓ ٤٤ ۛ وَيُولِيدُونَ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (المرسلات) ٣٢– (يْنَا نُتْعَجِّبَنَّ فِي جَنِّ وَنَحْرٍ وَمَآءَاتٍ وَمِنَ الْأَرْضِ فَأَطْرُقُّي نَحْوَتُوْنَ وَجَاهِدُونَ وَنَجْرُاهُمُ ﴿٤١﴾ ۛ وَفِي مَقْعَدٍ صِدْقٍ عِندَ مَا لِكَمْ تَذْرِي (القمر) ۴٣– (يْنَا نُتْعَجِّبَنَّ فِي جَنِّ وَنَحْرٍ وَمِنَ الْأَرْضِ فَأَطْرُقُّي نَحْوَتُوْنَ وَجَاهِدُونَ وَنَجْرُاهُمُ ﴿٤٤﴾ ۴٤– (١٤٤) (المرسلات) ۴٤– (١٤٥) (المرسلات)
(54-Verily, the Mūttaqūn (the pious) will be in the midst of Gardens and Rivers (Paradise)
55-In a seat of truth (i.e. paradise). King (Allah the One, the All-Blessed, the Most High, the Owner of Majesty and Honour).

This scene has a calm harmony by showing the pleasant widely in an expression controlling the pleasant and prosperity in a soft and slide pronunciation having a cadence suggesting easiness. In addition to providing phonological harmony represented in repeating the sound /r/ at the end of pauses in the scene. The sound /r/ is phonologically recurrent in Arabic needs repetition as if the real prayers in paradise and pleasant endlessly. This is an endless, sensuous and pleasant represented in the second section in the (fi: maqṣadi šidqin ʿinda malikim muqṭadir). The musical harmony of the verses which pictures sensuous pleasant of paradise as mentioned because what is between these scenes and harmony of indication coordination. This kind of indication may add to the verse aesthetic and high technique, as it is in:

زوّجناهم بخورٍ إنّ الْمُتَقِينَينَ فِي مَقَامٍ أَمِينٍ في جَن وَعُيُونٍ (52) في جَناتٍ وَعُيُونٍ (55) يَلْبَسُونَ مِنَّ سُنْدُسٍ وَإِسْتَبْرَاقٍ (54) يَدْعُونَ فِيهَا بِكُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ آمِينَ (55) (الدخان)

(Ad-Dukhaan: Al-Hilali & Khan, 581).

(51-Verily, the Mūttaqun (the pious) will be in place of security (Paradise) 52-Among Gardens and springs 53-Dressed in fine silk and (also) in thick silk, facing each other, 54-So, (it will be) and We shall marry them to Hūr (fair females) with wide lovely eyes 55-They will call therein for every kind of fruit in peace and security).

Most of Qura'nic scenes which picture an everlasting sensuous pleasant which is given to the real prayers by the great God. That scene which is also mentioned in (Ar-Rahmaan) sura. It is a scene distinct by a high and calm musical harmony coordinating with the scene of greatness and pleasure and enjoying another life after death. Music comes out of every thing from pronunciation, phrases, pauses and harmony.

Although short phrases of this scene, musical harmony takes a calm passage through the distinctive pauses by a calm tune. This calmness provided by a long elongating sound /a:/ which comes before /n/ in each pause of this scene or in the whole sura. This is an appearance can't be denied as found that the sound /n/ comes after elongating sound that is the most repeated in pauses of verses which describes situation of a pleasant and prosperity. That is because of the musical repetition and availability of clear tune as in:
(46) But for him who fears the standing before his Lord, there will be two Gardens (i.e. Paradise) 47-Then which of the Blessing of your Lord will you Both (jinn and men) deny? 48-With spreading branches 49-Then which of the Blessing of your Lord will you Both (jinn and men) deny? 50-in them (both) will be two springs flowing (free) 51- Then which of the Blessing of your Lord will you Both (jinn and men) deny? 52-in them (both) will be every kind of fruit in pairs 53- Then which of the Blessing of your Lord will you Both (jinn and men) deny? 54-Reclining upon the couches lined with silk brocade, and the fruits of the two Gardens will be near at hand 55- Then which of the Blessing of your Lord will you Both (jinn and men) deny?). 

The cause of increasing musical state of this scene is the repetition of the phrase (fabii ajji a:la:?:i rabikuma: tukaððiba:n) in a form of a question which gives the harmony an additional power as if this phrase is very useful for the whole scene. This scene with its harmony and pictures might describe the pleasant with best picture and most fine expression. This scene can be considered as a higher stage of pleasant which is the great God promised to give the faithful human beings. This is what another scene referred to, describing the second class of a pleasant in:

(62) And besides these two, there are two other Gardens (i.e. in paradise) 63- Then which of the Blessing of your Lord will you Both (jinn and men) deny? 64-Dark green (in colour) 65-Then which of the Blessing of your Lord will you Both (jinn and men) deny? 66-In them (both) will be fruits, and date palms and pomegranates 67- Then which of the Blessing of your Lord will you Both (jinn and men) deny?

This stage of pleasant seems to be less and lower than former stage which is described in the former scene. The musical harmony in this scene may have calmness and flexibility. It is pretty clear in its phrases or word pause or musical pause having tune of sound /n/, premature of long elongating which adds the verse an extension and appeared musical fed up. This is the significance of the whole (Ar-
Rahman) sura because the tune passing through the whole sura. This may be seen by its pauses, pronunciations and sounds leading to functional indications suitable with the pleasant scene.

Several scenes have pictured stages of the pleasant during the life after death and its similar sura verses. The scene which describes earlier to be near and at the first stage of endless paradise as in Suratul Waaqi’ah. If one looks to the other scene which is pictured by (Al- Waaqi’ah) sura which is dealing with the other stage who are living pleasant in Paradise those who are swore owners, one can find that there are a clear difference in nature and character of the rhythm noticed in this scene. One can see in this scene that the harmony is characterized with speed and hardness but sometimes desires calmness and slow. As if the first pleasant scene is more effective than the other in everything in picturing, harmony and pronunciations. Also there is another scene in:

وَأَصْحَابُ الْيَمِينِ (42) فِي سَدْرٍ مَّنْفُوعٍ (43) وَأَشْعَابُ ٍَّ (44) فِي طَلْحٍ مَّنْفُوعٍ (43) وَمَاءٍ مَّنْفُوعٍ (43) إِنَّ آنَثِيَاتٍ إِنَّ آنَثِيَاتٍ (45) فَجَعَلْنَاهُنَّ مَمْدُودًَّ (43) َّ فِي مَنْضُودٍَّ (43) وَفِي مَنْضُودٍَّ (43)


(Al-Waaqi’ah: Al-Hilali & Khan, 630).

(And those on the Right Hand how (fortunate) will be those on the Right Hand? They will be) among thornless lote trees, 29-And among Ŵalh (banana trees) with fruit piled one above another, 30-And in shade long-extended 31-And by water flowing constantly, 32-And fruit in plenty, 33-Whose supply is not cut off (by change of season) nor are they out of reach 34-And on couches or thrones, raised high 35-Verily, We have created them (maidens) of special creation 36-And made them virgins 37-Loving (their husbands only) (and) of equal age.

The harmony here from the beginning starts in a shape of a question that indicates greatness and difficulty in (ma: ašha:bul jami:n). It is a hard harmony adds to its hardness speed on environment too. The hardness of harmony is generated from its pronunciation power, phrases and ends of its pauses that mostly end with hard sounds /d/ and /b/. In addition to the use of some hard techniques such as negation, affirmative and interrogative to make the harmony more prominent.

Qutub (1967:135) finds that this scene is showing a physical and sensuous pleasant which seems in its specification some types of hardness. So, the scene comes with a hard harmony suitable with the hardness and violence which the Arab nomad who will feel it and influenced. Therefore, phases such as (sidrim maxdu:d, ţalhim mandu:d, ţilim mamdu:d and ma:im masku:b) is considered as a target of the Bedouin which is his wishing in his mind and desire. So, the harmony in this
scene is coordinating indication function which is held by a verse through picturing this Qura'nic scene.

According to what one mentioned, it seems that describing a scene of pleasant in Qura'an can be done by a musical calm and soft tune. Harmony is various and takes many positions suiting to the nature of a scene that one wants to picture it. Mostly, one finds pictures of a pleasant and pain is against each other in a Qura'nic verse and harmony and a musical cadence with them too.

3.Conclusions

In the light of the current study and the analysis of the data the researcher comes up with the following conclusions:

1. The correlation between rhythm and the other phonological aspects depends on the organized time. This observation leads to some kinds of mixing in the meaning of rhythm in general.

2. Rhythm is a symmetrical movement and pacement governed by this metrical formation that leads to harmonic formation. This formation emerged from the dynamical components of the utterance.

3. Rhythm doesn't form all the elements of harmony, yet there are other elements participate in making harmony more able to do its role in the text such as order, parallelism, balancing and repeating. Harmony is generated from the utterance itself rather than the organizing of the phrases. This point of view that gives legitimacy to the utterances to be rhythmic.

4. The function of rhythm is to connect the components of the text and binding them together. This may lead in turn to exhibit the impact on the recipient and this is the aim of using harmony. In this study, one may prove that the Qura'nic rhythmicality is distinguished by poetical one. This made the Arab to call the Glorious Qura'an magic having a great psychological impact and influence on the Arabs whether they are believers or unbelievers.

6. The study shows that the most repeated sounds in Qura'nic intervals are /n, m, r, d and b/, while vowels are /a:, i: and u:/ respectively.

7. The pleasant scene is pragmatically characterized by its calmness and staidness and its simplicity in the pronunciation and recitation that creates joy and happiness.
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