

PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS OF RHETORICAL QUESTIONS IN SURAH AR-RAHMAN

Turakhonova Badia Omonillayevna

UzSWLU, Teaching English methodology department

ABSTRACT

Surah Ar-Rahman, the 55th chapter of the Qur'an, is renowned for its poetic elegance and the recurrent rhetorical question: "Then which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?" This article explores the pragmatic functions of this repeated question, examining how it emphasizes divine blessings, prompts reflection, and reinforces the surah's central themes.

Key words: *exegesis, divine blessings, indirect speech acts, illocutionary force, sense of introspection, persuasive power.*

INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an employs various rhetorical devices to convey its messages effectively, with rhetorical questions serving as a prominent feature. In Surah Ar-Rahman, the question "Then which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?" is repeated 31 times, punctuating descriptions of Allah's blessings and judgments. This repetition is not merely stylistic; it serves specific pragmatic functions that enhance the surah's impact on its audience.

The role of rhetorical questions in performing a variety of communicative functions is strongly connected with their interpretation as indirect speech acts proposed in Searle (1969, 1979). Since such connection is highly significant in understanding heightened persuasive power of any discourse, the present attempts to establish it through uncovering the illocutionary force of a certain set of rhetorical questions.

Methods

This study utilizes a qualitative analysis of Surah Ar-Rahman, focusing on the repeated rhetorical question. By examining the context in which each instance occurs, we identify the pragmatic functions served by this repetition. The analysis draws on existing literature and interpretations to provide a comprehensive understanding of the rhetorical device's role within the surah.

Results

Emphasis on divine blessings

The repeated question underscores the multitude of Allah's favors, each instance following a description of a specific blessing or act of creation. This repetition serves

to remind the audience of the continuous and varied nature of divine generosity, prompting gratitude and acknowledgment.

Encouragement of reflection and self-examination

By posing the question repeatedly, the surah encourages listeners to reflect on their own recognition and appreciation of Allah's favors. It challenges individuals to consider whether they have denied or overlooked these blessings, fostering a sense of introspection and moral accountability.

Reinforcement of the surah's central themes

The rhetorical question ties together the surah's themes of creation, mercy, and judgment. Its repetition creates a rhythmic structure that reinforces the message of divine benevolence and the consequences of ingratitude, enhancing the surah's persuasive and emotive power.

Discussion

The use of rhetorical questions in Surah Ar-Rahman exemplifies the Qur'an's sophisticated rhetorical strategies. The repetition serves multiple pragmatic functions: it emphasizes the abundance of divine favors, prompts self-reflection among listeners, and reinforces the surah's overarching themes. This multifaceted approach enhances the surah's effectiveness in conveying its spiritual and moral lessons.

Emphasis on divine blessings:

Example: "He has let loose the two seas meeting together, / Between them is a barrier they do not transgress. / Then which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?" (Surah Ar-Rahman, verses 19-21)

This passage highlights the delicate balance maintained between the two seas, emphasizing the intricate design and purpose behind their creation. The rhetorical question serves to underscore the countless blessings bestowed upon humanity by Allah, even in the seemingly mundane aspects of nature.

Invitation to gratitude:

Example: "He sends down rain from the sky, / And rivers flow in their beds according to measure, / Then which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?" (Surah Ar-Rahman, verses 9-11)

This passage describes the essential role of rain in sustaining life on earth. The rhetorical question invites the reader to contemplate the significance of this blessing and express gratitude for the life-giving water that sustains all living beings.

Challenge to denial:

Example: "He has made the night for you a garment, / And sleep a repose, / And He has made the day for rising. / Then which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?" (Surah Ar-Rahman, verses 12-14)

This passage highlights the natural rhythm of day and night, essential for human life and activity. The rhetorical question challenges those who might take these fundamental aspects of existence for granted, urging them to acknowledge the divine purpose behind their creation.

Reinforcement of the theme:

Example: "He it is Who sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings, / Going before His mercy. / Then which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?" (Surah Ar-Rahman, verses 4-6)

This passage describes the role of winds in bringing rain and fertilizing the earth, essential for agricultural productivity and the sustenance of life. The repetition of the rhetorical question reinforces the overarching theme of Surah Ar-Rahman, emphasizing the countless ways in which Allah's mercy and beneficence are manifested in the natural world.

Engaging the reader/listener:

Example: "He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in truth, / And He has fashioned you and perfected your forms. / And He has made you fair in shape. / Then which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?" (Surah Ar-Rahman, verses 3-5)

This passage highlights the intricate process of human creation, from the formation of the heavens and earth to the delicate shaping of the human form. The rhetorical question encourages the reader to personally connect with the message, reflecting on their own existence and the divine power that brought them into being.

CONCLUSION

The repeated rhetorical question in Surah Ar-Rahman is a powerful device that serves to emphasize divine blessings, encourage reflection, and reinforce central themes. Its strategic use exemplifies the Qur'an's rhetorical sophistication and its ability to engage and persuade its audience through layered and purposeful language.

REFERENCES

1. Mustapha Şādiq al-Rāfi‘ī (1880–1937 AD) in his book *I‘jāz al-al-Qur’ān wa al-Balāghah al-Nabawīyyah*.
2. Al-Shaykh Amīn al-Khūlī (1896–1966) *Manāhij Tajdīd fī al-Naḥw wa al-Balāghah wa al-Tafsīr wa al-Adab*.
3. Sayyid Quṭb (1909–1966) *al-Taṣwīr al-Fannī fī al-Qur’ān*, *Mashāhid al-Qiyāmah fī al-Qur’ān*, and his prominent *Tafsīr Fi Dhilāl al-Qur’ān*.
4. ‘Ā’ishah ‘Abd al-Raḥman (Bint al-Shāṭi’) (1913–1998) *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī lil al-Qur’ān al-Karīm*.