

RHETORICAL DEVICES IN THE HOLY QUR'ĀN: GRAMMATICAL SHIFT AND COMMUNICATED SUBJECT MATTERS IN *SURAH AL-BAQARAH*

NABILA TABASSUM

Riphah Institute of Media Sciences

Riphah International University, Pakistan

Email: nabilatabassum123@gmail.com

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Abstract

Message is the most important part of communication: Rhetoric plays an important role to communicate the message effectively. The Holy Qur'ānic communication is abundant in rhetorical devices. Grammatical shift or *iltifāt* in Arabic, as a rhetorical device, is considered a linguistic ornament that is used widespread in The Holy Qur'ān. Previous studies on grammatical shift in The Holy Qur'ān have laid stress on exploring its affectivity or its transference into other languages. Studies concerned with transference of grammatical shift into other languages found that this phenomenon is not being translated accurately. Thus, ambiguous translations may lead to misunderstand the message of The Holy Qur'ān. However, little research has been carried out to explore implications of grammatical shift with reference to communication. Whereas, this feature demands special attention that could present the divine message as correctly and perfectly as possible. Therefore, the contribution of the present paper is to disseminate the rhetoric of *surah al-Baqarah* with special emphasis on subject matters and explore messages and ethos in the verses where grammatical shift between first and third person occurs. An in-depth study of the selected verses of The Holy Qur'ān is conducted. Grounded theory is used to identify the main concepts in the source text. This paper has contributed a great deal in the clarification and understanding of the nature of this rhetorical device and underlying messages behind the text. It is expected that exploration of communicated subject matters would provide a deeper understanding of the selected verses, where Allah Almighty has shifted His reference between 1st and 3rd person and would also pave a path for future studies.

Keywords: The Holy Qur'ān, *Surat al-Baqarah*, Communication, Rhetorical Device, Grammatical Shift.

1. Introduction

Rhetoric is a tool that enhances composition of reading, speaking, or writing (McGuigan 2007, 3).¹ Rhetoric is considered a universal feature of communication and the art of using language persuasively to make it more effective (Al-Quran and Al-Azzam 2009, 1).² Speakers and writers use this skill in their discourse to persuade the audience (McGuigan 2007, 3).³

Messages are an important component of communication. Message is: “a communication in writing, in speech, or by signals” (Merriam-Webster 2003, message).⁴ Watkins is of the view that the message is, in fact, the purpose or the underlying meaning behind the text (Watkins 2017).⁵ As a noun first known use of message was in the 14th century (Merriam-Webster 2003).⁶ Thus, message is a piece of information that someone gives to a recipient when speaking directly is not possible and a hidden meaning behind a text or speech is also a message. Muhammad (2021, 103)⁷ emphasized, whenever words are inadequate or insufficient to communicate religious messages, the symbols can be the best option to convey the message.

Human beings are always in need of divine guidance or a message from the Creator. In fact, divine messages explain the nature of the relationship between the Creator and the creation. Divine means “relating to, or proceeding directly from God” (Merriam-Webster 2003).⁸ Thus, the message of Allah Almighty is divine. Belief in divine message is an integral part of Islamic faith. Divine message is not communicable directly to everyone at all times. The channel used to communicate the divine message to mankind is prophet-hood (Solihu 2009, 167).⁹

The communication process includes the sender, the message, the receiver and the feedback. Rhetoric is not only concerned with the message but with the persuasive methods of techniques that have its roots in Greece and Rome. In the 4th century (BC.), Aristotle’s views regarding rhetoric appeared and rhetoric was identified as a system of persuasion (Mayuuf 2021, 2-3).¹⁰ In other words, contemporary study of persuasion has its roots in Aristotle’s Rhetoric (Demirdögen 2010).¹¹

Aristotle used three terms; ethos (appeal by ethics), pathos (appeal by emotions) and logos (appeal by reason), to explain how

rhetoric works (Mayuuf 2021, 2)¹². Ethos is “the distinguishing character, sentiment, moral nature, or guiding beliefs of a person, group, or institution” (Merriam-Webster 2003).¹³ Ethos is the ability of a speaker to establish a positive image of himself in the perception of the audience (Skerlep 2001, 180).¹⁴ Thus, to influence an audience, use of ethos is effective, as it establishes a positive image of the communicator.

Rhetorical devices are frequently used by smart communicators to convince the audience of their argument (Al-Qur’an and Al-Azzam 2009, 3).¹⁵ Use of rhetorical devices in media messages to influence the audience is very common. A case in point is advertisement, which is considered an essential element of electronic and print media. Usually, rhetorical devices are frequently found in advertisements because the major goal of advertisement is not only to inform an audience, but also to persuade (Tom and Anmarie 1999, 39).¹⁶

Grammatical shift is a rhetorical device (Amirdabbaghian 2017, 65).¹⁷ As a means of communication grammatical shift has an extraordinary impact (Al-Badani, Awal, and Safinaz Zainudin 2015, 140).¹⁸ Grammatical shift refers to an unexpected and sudden shift on the part of the speaker or writer from one mode of address to another (Ibraheem and Al-Bagoa 2010, 115).¹⁹ For instance, it may be a sudden shift from third person (he, she, and they) to the first person (I, we). The typology of grammatical shift can be categorized as; change in person (between 1st, 2nd and 3rd person, which is usually divided into six kinds), change in number (between singular, dual and plural), change in addressee, change in the tense of the verb, change in the case marker (between accusative case and nominative case), and using noun in place of a pronoun. (Haleem 1992, 411).²⁰ Robinson (2003)²¹ has admired the detailed work done by Abdel Haleem. However, Robinson has limited his discussion to a few striking categories which occur in the Holy Qur’ān on the same theme (e.g., third person singular to first person plural, third person singular to first person singular, first person plural or singular to third person singular etc. Amirdabbaghian (2017)²² in his research, has quoted the typology categorized by Abdel-Haleem (1992).²³ The author has also quoted the preference reported by Abdul-Haleem. Thus, work in the area of typology of shift in person is fairly advanced. In this paper, two types of shift in person; shift from 1st to 3rd person and shift from 3rd to 1st person are focused to explore

the communicated subject matters in *surah al-Baqarah*.

Grammatical shifts in The Holy Qur'ān are used to enhance expression and are perfectly logical as these sudden changes play a rhetorical role. As a linguistic ornament, the pragmatic function of grammatical shift is to achieve vividness and avoid the monotony of style (Al-Badani, Awal, Safinaz Zainudin, and Aladdin 2015).²⁴ As a rhetorical device grammatical shift has various functions such as creating terror within or shocking the addressee by doing an action (Al-Quran and Al-Azzam 2009, 1).²⁵ Furthermore, the person shift is not an incoherent, accidental reference to Allah Almighty but a linguistic device used to emphasize the idea that Allah Almighty is not a 'person' and therefore, cannot be defined by the pronouns applicable to finite beings (Riddell, 2002, 79).²⁶ The change of rhetoric from one mode to another causes freshness and provides variety for the listener and renews his interest (Haleem 1992, 410).²⁷

2. Literature Review

Review of the literature includes some information from the discipline of communication and Islamic studies with reference to the divine message and grammatical shift between first and third person. Following is a glimpse of some previous related work.

Marshall McLuhan (1964)²⁸ is well-known as a communication theorist, his words "The medium is the message" are very famous. McLuhan was of the view that 'message' is "change of scale or pace or pattern" that a new invention "introduces into human affairs." (Federman 2004, 1).²⁹ For instance, the message of a criminal newscast is not the content or news stories themselves, but a change in the attitude of the audience towards crime, this may be the creation of a climate of fear. Thus, the content itself is an obvious piece of information that communicates an indirect message.

Although McLuhan is usually known as a scholar of communications and mass culture, but his views about communication and religion are generally neglected, which are at the heart of culture. McLuhan noted how something is communicated, the medium and the effects of medium on the message. Moreover, "In the person of Jesus, McLuhan saw that God chose a medium – our human nature, that contains its own message, namely that God loves His creation." (De Souza 2011)³⁰. In other words, a McLuhan

message tells us to look beyond the obvious and explore the non-obvious and that non-obvious is the real message.

Rhetoric is the art of communicating persuasively to influence audiences. In rhetoric, a rhetorical device is a technique that a communicator uses to persuade the reader or listener towards a particular frame of view (Sharma 2014).³¹ Bokor's (2013)³² study examined rhetorical performance of journalistic genres and found that devices of rhetoric are used in journalism as a tool of argumentation and persuasion and suggested that a good journalist must be a good rhetorician. Rhetoric is not only concerned with presenting thoughts, but it influences ways of thinking. Moreover, rhetorical devices like simile, metaphor, personification, etc. are frequently and consciously used in advertising. (Chetia 2015, 980-84).³³ Rhetorical devices are also used in visual presentations. Visual rhetoric is used as a persuasive technique in advertising. Furthermore, advertisements use popular images as visual rhetorical devices to influence and inspire the consumers (Köksal 2013, 1-9).³⁴

Speakers wish to influence their audience within the framework of communication and this can be seen in interpersonal communication and in situations where the addressee is absent or unable to reply (Amossy 2001, 5).³⁵ The researchers analyzed Tweeting comments in scholarly articles on the basis of ethos, pathos and logos and found commonly used modes of persuasion in Twitter comments were ethos and pathos, logos were less used. Furthermore, most ethos based Twitter comments were related to the credibility (ethos) of the journal paper (Charland and Li 2017, 1-23).³⁶

Several studies on sacred texts argue that scriptures are not only holy texts but divine communication. Brown (2007)³⁷ conducted a study on the Bible to examine scripture as communication and found that describing the Bible in language evokes its communicative nature. The phrase 'word of God' is frequent in the Bible and if the Bible is the word of God then we should listen, as speaking and listening is a language of communication. The communicative model of the Biblical interpretation is shown in works of several recent writers. Texts as authorial discourse introduce three domains; author, text, and reader. The author communicates, text is the vehicle to convey communication, and the reader is addressed (the one who responds).

Allah Almighty conveys His message through a prophet who

forms a link between the Creator and the created; no other channel is available to receive divine communication. Allah Almighty never sends angels to every individual; His communication is through prophets who receive divine messages through the angel (Mufti 2018).³⁸ The Holy Qur'ān is the final revelation of Allah Almighty that contains the divine message to humanity, revealed to His last prophet (Ḥaḍrat Muhammad Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu 'alaihi wa 'alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam). This divine communication or speech of Allah Almighty is a final message in a long series of divine messages started with Adam ('*Alaih As-Salām*) and ended with Ḥaḍrat Muhammad Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu 'alaihi wa 'alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam (Nigosian 2004).³⁹

Haleem and Haleem (2010)⁴⁰ emphasized that The Holy Qur'ān is not like an academic thesis but the book of guidance that has a unique style of *targhīb* and *tarhīb* (instilling desire and fear) and this style is an important feature of The Holy Qur'ān. The authors found that The Holy Qur'ān has its own self-created stylistic features which have not been understood and studied in English.

Surah al-Baqarah is the longest chapter of The Holy Qur'ān with the highest number of grammatical shifts (Al-Badani, Awal and Safinaz Zainudin 2015).⁴¹ Farrin (2010)⁴² conducted a study on structural analysis of *surah al-Baqarah*. The researcher divided the whole surah into different sections and discussed structural features of each section in detail.

Klar (2015)⁴³ focused on studying repetition of rhetorical items in *surah al-Baqarah* and viewed the surah's textual blocks through contextual lens. Another study analyzed attributes of *Taqwa* as presented in *surah al-Baqarah* and found eleven attributes of *Taqwa* are mentioned in the surah *al-Baqarah*. The study reported that among the attributes of *Taqwa* major emphasis is on oneness of Allah Almighty (*Tawḥīd*) (Sidek et al 2017).⁴⁴

Mayuuf (2021)⁴⁵ examined some of the Holy Qur'ānic verses to shed light on some of the rhetorical devices and revealed various rhetorical aspects that are essential in the structure of religious text. The author reported most common figures of speech, their usage in the Holy Qur'ānic discourse and analyzed some verses from the Holy Qur'ānic text as representatives. Tzortzis (2021)⁴⁶ is of the view that grammatical shift is a unique stylistic and rhetorical device

employed in the Holy Qur'ān. Moreover, The Holy Qur'ān is the only text that possesses the highest frequency of grammatical shift and other rhetorical devices. The author also shed light on different rhetorical, linguistic, and ideological aspects of chapter al-Kawthar of The Holy Qur'ān. Muslim specialist of Arabic rhetoric such as Robinson (2003)⁴⁷ admired the grammatical shifts in The Holy Qur'ān and called them very effective rhetorical devices. On the other hand, some European readers of The Holy Qur'ān consider it disorientating.

Several studies have been conducted on the phenomenon of grammatical shift. For instance, Durakovic (2007)⁴⁸ focused at *al-Fātiḥah* to examine the grammatical shift and its main function in The Holy Qur'ān, and found this shift makes a suddenness through which the entire grammatical perspective is changed. Robinson (2003)⁴⁹ has discussed grammatical shift focusing on the sudden changes in person and number and highlighted the affectivity of this rhetorical device as well as he shed light on the communication style of Allah Almighty that why Allah Almighty in The Holy Qur'ān has referred to Himself in different styles; Allah Almighty has used the first person singular 'I', the first person plural 'We' and Allah Almighty has also referred to Himself as He (Allah Almighty), 'the All-merciful and so on. The author argued that these rhetorical shifts are dynamics of The Holy Qur'ān.

Abdel-Haleem (1992)⁵⁰ investigated the rhetorical purposes of grammatical shift and reported that in The Holy Qur'ān Allah Almighty refers to Himself in the first person or in the third person but He never talked to Himself in the second person. The researcher compared The Holy Qur'ānic rhetoric with poetry and found poets often talk to themselves in the second person to encourage themselves, whereas Allah Almighty is the Creator and has power overall, so He has never talked to Himself in the second person. Haleem and Haleem (2010)⁵¹ has explored all types of shifts in person and indicated their positions in The Holy Qur'ān. Al-Quran and Al-Azzam (2009)⁵² investigated this shift and called it apostrophe. The study also identified various functions of apostrophe that can't be easily grasped by the ordinary readers of The Holy Qur'ān and also highlighted the problems and issues of transference of apostrophe into the target language. Another study analyzed transference of grammatical shift into English and found that translating grammatical shift into English is a problematic issue. The researcher concluded that only linguistic

knowledge of English and Arabic is not sufficient for The Holy Qur'ān translator, rather the translator needs advanced knowledge of Arabic rhetoric (Ibraheem, Qusay, and Al-Bagoa 2010).⁵³ Abdul-Raof (2005)⁵⁴ investigated the reason why translating grammatical shifts in English is problematic and found it a unique rhetorical feature of Arabic language; whereas, English doesn't tolerate this Arabic norm. Amirdabbaghian (2017)⁵⁵ found that this rhetorical feature is a problematic issue because of the differences between Arabic and other languages. The researcher concluded that defects in transference of grammatical shifts may lead to misinterpretation of The Holy Qur'ān. Hence, the prevailing point of view in this field is that some translations are not able to present grammatical shift related features accurately.

Researchers have investigated grammatical shift in *surah al-Baqarah* but mostly they focused on the transference of grammatical shift into other languages (e.g., Al-Badani, Awal, Safinaz Zainudin, and Aladdin 2014).⁵⁶ According to Al-Badani, Awal, Safinaz Zainudin and Aladdin (2015)⁵⁷ *surah al-Baqarah* has the highest number of grammatical shifts.

This paper employs grounded theory to identify the concepts of those verses, where grammatical shift between first and third person occurs in *surah al-Baqarah*. Grounded theory enables an understanding of a specific area which demands no preformed concepts. (Jones, Michael, Kriflik, and Zanko 2005)⁵⁸ This theory offers four stages; codes, concepts, categories, and theory development. In coding researchers use their previous knowledge about the target text being investigated, as a result an interpretive text appears which often raise the questions that how the phenomenon can be further investigated, then codes are grouped into similar concepts, finally on the basis of concepts 'categories' are formed and categories are basis for the creation of a theory (Böhm 2004).⁵⁹ A thorough review of the literature revealed that previous studies have laid stress on communicational aspects of the Holy Qur'ān including main functions of grammatical shift in The Holy Qur'ān. Several studies have laid stress on transference of grammatical shift and concluded this phenomenon is not being translated accurately. Hence, ambiguity may lead to distortion of the message (Ibraheem and Al-Bagoa 2010),⁶⁰ as a large number of the audience are non-Arabs. However, there is no study available that sheds light on these

verses with reference to communication. For this reason, this paper aims to fill this gap, focusing on the divine message and exploring the non-obvious messages along with ethos.

3. Research Question

What subject matters; messages and ethos are communicated in the verses where a grammatical shift between first and third person occurs in the verses of *surah al-Baqarah*?

4. Methodology

To study the communicated messages and ethos in the verses of *surah al-Baqarah* where grammatical shift between first and third person occurs, this paper will make use of the source text of The Holy Qur'ān. A specific chapter of The Holy Qur'ān; *surah al-Baqarah* is chosen for this research because it is the longest chapter of the Holy Qur'ān with the highest number of grammatical shifts. Based on Haleem's (2010)⁶¹ investigation, current paper is concerned to study twelve verses of *surah al-Baqarah*.

In this study, '*Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*' is chosen to briefly explain the selected verses because *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* is considered unique in its style and *Ibn Kathīr* has given utmost attention to explain The Holy Qur'ān through The Holy Qur'ān and rejected any foreign sources in his interpretation (Sultan 2004).⁶²

Three phases are followed in this study. In the first phase, the researcher read the source text to identify and segregate the verses where Allah Almighty has shifted His personal reference between first and third person. In the second phase English version of *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* (2017)⁶³ is used to translate and explain the verses of the source text. In the third phase the researcher consulted several exegeses of The Holy Qur'ān, available in English and Urdu Languages to identify the communicated messages and ethos in selected verses. Moreover, grounded theory is used as a lens to identify the themes and concepts of selected verses, on the basis of concepts communicated messages are explored.

5. Findings and Discussion

This part presents 12 selected verses of *surah al-Baqarah* into

three categories; category 1 includes verse with shift from first to third person, category 2 includes verse with shift from third to first person, and category 3 includes verse with both shifts. Each verse is presented along with English translation, communicated messages and ethos.

5.1. Category 1

The verses where Allah Almighty has shifted His reference from first to third person are; 5, 37, and 161.

5.1.1. Verse 5. Source text

أُولَئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

“It is these who are guided by their Lord; and it is just these who are successful” (Usmani 2010).⁶⁴

Explanation: This verse is interlinked with the previous verses. Previous verses tell that guidance is granted to the *Muttaqīn*, some characteristics of believers are also mentioned. In this verse Allah Almighty praised the followers of His guidance and declared them successful.

Message and Ethos: The message in this verse is that the guidance (insight from Allah Almighty) and success in this world and hereafter are awarded to believers only. Allah Almighty has referred to Himself with one of His attributes; the Lord. The ethical credibility communicated in this verse is that Allah Almighty is the Lord and His guidance leads people to be successful.

5.1.2. Verse 37. Source Text

فَتَلَقَىٰ آدَمَ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝

“Then ‘Adam learned certain words (to pray with) from his Lord; so, Allah accepted his repentance. No doubt, He is the Most-Relenting, the Very-Merciful.” (Usmani 2010)⁶⁵

Explanation: This verse is interlinked with the previous verses, previous verses tell that when Satan led Ādam (*‘Alaih As-Salām*)

and Ḥawwa ('*Alaih As-Salām*) away from Paradise, and Allah Almighty sent them down on earth, then Adam did not know how to repent, so Allah Almighty taught him some words (to repent) from his Lord. Thus, Adam repented and supplicated to Allah Almighty.

Message and Ethos: The message in this verse is that in case of any mistake, repentance is the only solution for mankind (Ādam's offspring). In this verse three attributes are defining Allah Almighty, the Lord, the Ever Relenting, the Most Merciful and these attributes are communicating the ethical credibility of Allah Almighty as well.

5.1.3. Verse 161. Source Text

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارًا أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَيْهِمُ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ
وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ ۝

“Indeed, those who disbelieved and died while they were disbelievers, upon them is the curse of Allah, and of angels, and of all human beings together.” (Usmani 2010)⁶⁶

Explanation: The curse of Allah Almighty, the angels and all mankind is upon those who are unbelievers and die unbelievers.

Message and Ethos: Disbelievers are cursed people. In this verse Allah Almighty has communicated His anger upon those who disbelieve and die as disbelievers. Allah Almighty has referred to Himself with His personal name; Allah. The word ‘Allah’ presents His divinity.

5.2. Category 2

The verses where Allah Almighty has shifted His reference from third to first person are; 47, 73, 83, 118, and 160.

5.2.1. Verse 47. Source Text

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

“O Children of Isra’il (Israel) remember My blessing that I conferred upon you, and that I gave you excellence over the worlds.” (Usmani 2010)⁶⁷

Explanation: This verse is interlinked with the previous verses. With reference to some historical incidents, in this verse Allah Almighty is reminding His blessings for the children of Israel, especially, how He preferred them, more so than any other previous nation.

Message and Ethos: Allah Almighty has communicated His previous kindness and lovely attitude towards the children of Israel. Allah Almighty has referred to Himself with a personal pronoun (first person singular); I.

5.2.2. Verse 73. Source text

فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبُوهُ بِبَعْضِهَا ۗ كَذَلِكَ يُخِي اللَّهُ الْمَوْتَى وَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ۝

“So, We said, Strike him with a part of it. This is how Allah revives the dead; and He shows you His signs, so that you may understand.” (Usmani 2010)⁶⁸

Explanation: This verse is interlinked with the previous verses. This verse is concluding the story of the murdered Israeli man and the slaughtered cow. Allah Almighty instructed them to strike the dead man with a piece of the slaughtered cow. As a result, Allah Almighty brought the dead to life and this was also a sign of His divinity.

Message and Ethos: On the one hand, Allah Almighty has communicated His ability to bring the dead back to life, as bringing dead to life is beyond human capacity. On the other hand, this verse communicates the message that People can hide their crimes from others, but they cannot hide their bad deeds from Allah Almighty. In this verse, Allah Almighty has referred to Himself with a personal pronoun ‘We’ (first person plural).

5.2.3. Verse 83. Source Text

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لَا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ
وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ
إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ۝

“(Remember) when We took a pledge from the children of Isra’il (Israel): You shall not worship anyone other than Allah; and you shall do good to the parents, and to near of kin, and to orphans and the needy. And say to the people what is good, and be steadfast in Salah (prayer), and pay Zakah. Then, you went back (on your word), all but a few among you, and you are used to turning away.” (Usmani 2010)⁶⁹

Explanation: Allah Almighty took a pledge from the tribe of Israel to abide by His commands; worship alone Allah Almighty, be dutiful and good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, poor, speak good words to people, perform the prayer and give *Zakah* but except few of them, they turned away.

Message and Ethos. The message is that all divine commands are for the good of humanity, this reflects the caring attitude of the Creator towards the creation. Allah Almighty has referred to Himself with a personal pronoun ‘We’ (first person plural).

5.2.4. Verse 118. Source Text

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ لَوْلَا يُكَلِّمُنَا اللَّهُ أَوْ تَأْتِينَا آيَةٌ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ
 مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ تَشَابَهتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ

“Those who do not know say: Why is it that Allah does not speak to us, nor does a sign come to us? So spoke those before them as these people do. Their hearts resemble each other. We have indeed made the signs clear for the people who have certitude.” (Usmani 2010)⁷⁰

Explanation: The statement mentioned in this verse was the statement of the Arab disbelievers. The statement of the Arab disbelievers followed the statements of the other religions before them. So, Allah Almighty said their hearts are alike, which means the Arab idolaters are just like those before them. However, Allah Almighty has made the signs of His divinity clear for those who believe with certainty.

Message and Ethos: Asking Allah Almighty for a miraculous

sign is not, but an old phenomenon. However, signs of divinity are clear enough for those who have knowledge. Furthermore, divinity of Allah Almighty doesn't need human approval. Allah Almighty has referred to Himself with a personal pronoun 'We' (first person plural).

5.2.5. Verse 160. Source Text

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَبَيَّنُّوا فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنَا التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝

“Yet, those who repent and correct and declare (what they used to conceal), their repentance is accepted by Me. I am the Most-Relenting, the Most-Merciful.” (Usmani 2010)⁷¹

Explanation: This verse is interlinked with the previous verse. In previous verses Allah Almighty has cursed those who hide the religious commandments. This verse tells that Allah Almighty has excluded (from the curse) all those who repent to Him, do righteous deeds, and openly declare the truth which they concealed; Allah Almighty accepts their repentance.

Message and Ethos: Those who regret what they have been doing in the past (e.g., call to innovation, or even disbelief) and they correct their behaviour and repent to Allah Almighty, then Allah Almighty will forgive them, as Allah Almighty is the One Who accepts repentance. Allah Almighty has referred to Himself with a personal pronoun 'I' (first person singular), and His two attributes, the Ever Relenting, the Most Merciful.

5.3. Category 3

The verses where Allah Almighty has shifted His reference in first and third person are; 23 and 172.

5.3.1. Verse 23. Source Text

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ

وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ۝

“If you are in doubt about what We have revealed to Our servant, then bring a Surah similar to this, and do call your supporters other than Allah, if you are true.” (Usmani 2010)⁷²

Explanation: Those who have doubts about what Allah Almighty has sent down, they are challenged to produce another *surah* equal to the Holy Qur’ān and they may use all possible resources to do so. Despite this open offer people are not capable of producing a single *surah* similar to the Holy Qur’ān.

Message and Ethos: The message of the Messenger of Allah Almighty is true, and the revelation of the Holy Qur’ān is beyond human capacity. The ethical credibility communicated in this verse is that revelation of the Holy Qur’ān is beyond human capacity, only Allah Almighty can reveal the Holy Qur’ān. Allah Almighty has referred to Himself with a personal pronoun ‘We’ (first person plural), and then Allah Almighty has shifted His reference from first to third person and referred to Himself with His personal name; Allah.

5.3.2. Verse 172. Source Text

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُلُوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِلَّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ ۝

“O you who believe, eat of the good things We have provided to you and be grateful to Allah, if it is He whom you worship (in real terms).” (Usmani 2010)⁷³

Explanation: Allah Almighty commands His believing servants to consume lawful things and be grateful to Him, for the things He has provided them.

Message and Ethos: The message is that believers must be grateful to Him after consuming those pure (lawful) things which Allah Almighty has provided for them. The ethical credibility communicated in this verse is that Allah Almighty is the Sustainer and the Provider. Allah Almighty has referred to Himself with a personal pronoun ‘We’ (first person plural), and then He has shifted His reference from first to third person and referred to Himself with His personal name; Allah.

6. Conclusion

The study has examined the rhetoric of the verses of *surah al-Baqarah* and investigated the subject matters; divine messages and conveyed ethical credibility of Allah Almighty. The study found several non-obvious messages along with various ethos, communicated through the verses where grammatical shift between first and third person occurs. Exploration of underlying meaning behind the text and ethos has highlighted the divine messages that are communicated through these verses. It is important here to mention that this paper has studied the selected verses of *surah al-Baqarah* to investigate the conveyed messages and ethos with reference to the communication. Understanding the grammatical shift in translated versions of the Holy Qur'ān is problematic, and this issue can't be resolved without exerting various types of efforts that can help in preserving and communicating the features of divine communication. Therefore, several issues should be discussed in future studies, such as exploration of the communication pattern, rhetorical reasons, rhetorical effects, rhetorical analysis and framing of the verses where grammatical shift between first and third person occurs.

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