

The Rhetoric of Persuasion in Qur'anic Discourse: Surah Al-Ma'un as a Model

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Received: 18.01.2026

Accepted: 27.06.2026

Publishing: 21.07.2026

Abstract

This research seeks to explore the mechanisms of the rhetoric of persuasion in Qur'anic discourse, taking Surah Al-Ma'un as an applied model, through a rhetorical-argumentative approach that transcends the purely aesthetic view of rhetoric to consider it as a persuasive communicative act aimed at the receiver. The research is based on the hypothesis that Qur'anic inimitability (*I'jaz*) is not only manifested in the aesthetics of composition, but also in its superior ability to employ rhetorical and argumentative energies to build a coherent persuasive discourse that reshapes the receiver's worldview. The theoretical aspect focuses on rooting the concept of the rhetoric of persuasion in both Arab and Western heritage, distinguishing between persuasion and argumentation, with a focus on argumentation theory in the New Rhetoric. The applied aspect analyzes Surah Al-Ma'un phonetically, morphologically, syntactically, and semantically, revealing its synergistic persuasive strategies, such as the oath structure, syntactic shifts, the technique of contrast-based imagery, pronoun shifts, and rhythmic engineering. The research concludes that Surah Al-Ma'un represents a unique model of condensed persuasive discourse that achieves its goal through the synergy of rhetorical, argumentative, and aesthetic mechanisms, transcending mere information to profoundly impact the mind and conscience.

Keywords: Rhetoric of Persuasion, Qur'anic Discourse, Surah Al-Ma'un, Argumentation, New Rhetoric, Rhetorical Analysis, Inimitability.

Introduction

Arabic rhetorical studies, in one of their significant aspects, have become imprisoned by an aesthetic and taste-oriented perspective that views the text as a closed linguistic structure, evoking in the receiver a sense of pleasure and wonder, without going beyond this to connect

these structures to the speaker's intentions and their persuasive impact on shaping the receiver's convictions and behavior. With the opening up to modern discourse analysis methodologies, especially the "New Rhetoric" as formulated by Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, rhetoric has been restored to its status as the "study of persuasive discourse." This opens a fertile horizon for re-reading Qur'anic discourse, not only as a text miraculous in its composition and imagery, but as a persuasive and argumentative discourse of the highest order, seeking to effect a radical transformation in human visions, beliefs, and behavior. 【1】

This study engages in this research trajectory, attempting to explore the mechanisms of the "rhetoric of persuasion" in Qur'anic discourse through an applied model: the Meccan Surah Al-Ma'un. In its seven short verses, it presents an intense and profound persuasive discourse that redefines faith and worship and exposes the contradictions of pretenders. Surah Al-Ma'un was chosen for analysis because it represents a unique rhetorical and argumentative laboratory; it is a short surah containing a density of rhetorical devices—oaths, interrogatives, negations, pronoun shifts, and imagery techniques based on contrast—making it rich material for testing the research hypotheses and procedural tools. This raises the central problematic question: How do rhetorical and argumentative mechanisms synergize in Surah Al-Ma'un to construct a persuasive discourse, and what strategies does the text employ to redefine the concept of denial of religion and link it to social behavior? What is the cumulative persuasive impact of these strategies on the receiver?

To answer this problematic, this research adopts an analytical methodology grounded in the achievements of traditional Arabic rhetoric, including its tools for analyzing composition, imagery, and rhythm, while simultaneously drawing upon modern discourse analysis tools, foremost among them the theory of argumentation in the New Rhetoric and reception theories concerned with the text's effect on the receiver. This can be termed "argumentative rhetoric," which transcends the concern for describing beauty to probe the depths of the persuasive power embedded in discourse. 【2】 This integrative approach allows for combining the internal examination of the Qur'anic text's aesthetics with its persuasive function and impact on the receiver, aligning with the characteristic of Qur'anic discourse that blends formal beauty, depth of content, and power of influence.

This research is organized into two main sections: a theoretical section that grounds the concept of the "rhetoric of persuasion" in ancient and contemporary rhetorical thought and defines its procedural tools for analyzing Qur'anic text; and an applied section that analyzes Surah Al-Ma'un through a rhetorical-argumentative lens, tracing its phonetic, morphological, syntactic, and semantic structures and their persuasive implications. The study concludes with a set of findings that reveal the distinctiveness of Qur'anic persuasive discourse as manifested in this short Meccan model.

Section One: The Rhetoric of Persuasion – From Theoretical Grounding to Applied Horizons

First: The Concept of the Rhetoric of Persuasion in Ancient Scholarship – Toward an Arabic Foundation

The compound term "rhetoric of persuasion" does not appear in the classical heritage texts. However, the spirit and essence of this concept were strongly present at the core of Arabic rhetorical and critical scholarship, which emerged within the embrace of Qur'anic culture. For **Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani** (d. 471 AH), the author of *Dala'il al-I'jaz* (Evidences of Inimitability) and *Asrar al-Balaghah* (Secrets of Eloquence), rhetoric is not merely verbal embellishment or decorative figures of speech, but rather the composition and structuring of speech in a manner that conforms to the requirements of the situation (*muqtada al-hal*) and achieves the speaker's purpose in the listener's soul. For al-Jurjani, *al-nazm* (composition) is "the linking of words to one another, and making some the cause of others" [3] —which produces a specific grammatical meaning that is the very essence of rhetoric. This grammatical-semantic meaning cannot be understood apart from the speaker's persuasive intentions. When a speaker speaks, they aim not merely to inform but to instill in the listener's soul meanings and states that vary according to the composition. Al-Jurjani recognized that among the secrets of rhetoric is its ability to influence the receiver, direct them, and stir their emotions, which constitutes the core of the persuasive act. Speaking about precedence and postponement (*al-taqdim wa al-ta'khir*), he says: "It is a chapter of abundant benefits, numerous beauties, vast scope, and distant aim. It never ceases to create for you new forms of excellence and lead you to subtleties" [4]. These semantic subtleties produced by precedence—such as specification, emphasis, and suspense—are not aesthetic ends in themselves but persuasive tools that enable the speaker to shape the listener's mind and direct their attention.

Similarly, **al-Sakkaki** (d. 626 AH), in *Miftah al-'Ulum* (The Key to Sciences), when establishing the science of meanings (*'ilm al-ma'ani*), defined it as the science "by which the conditions of the Arabic expression that conform to the requirements of the situation are known" [5]. The requirement of the situation is not merely an external context but a complex network encompassing the speaker's persuasive purpose, the mental and psychological state of the addressee, and the general communicative context. Brevity and prolixity, declarative and performative utterances, precedence and postponement, connection and separation—all topics of the science of meanings—are tools that acquire rhetorical value only to the extent they achieve a persuasive effect on the addressee and suit the situation. If the addressee is a denier, emphasis becomes a necessary persuasive tool; if the addressee is open-minded, simple declarative information suffices. This theorization constitutes an implicit foundation for a theory of the "rhetoric of persuasion" that makes the receiver a central element in the communicative process. **Al-Jahiz** (d. 255 AH) affirmed this meaning earlier when he spoke of the necessity of considering the listener's state, saying: "The speaker should know the values of meanings and balance them against the values of the listeners" [6]. This balancing between levels of speech and levels of listeners is, at its core, a persuasive strategy aimed at adapting discourse to the receiver's horizon of expectations to ensure maximum impact.

Second: The Rhetoric of Persuasion in Light of Modern Linguistics – The Theory of Argumentation

Modern linguistics and pragmatics have restored rhetoric to its status as a theory of argumentation and persuasion, transcending the long centuries in which rhetoric was confined to the sciences of eloquence and embellishment (*al-bayan wa al-badi'*) and became synonymous with verbal artifice and stylistic ornamentation. **Chaim Perelman** and **Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca** are pioneers of this new direction in their foundational work, *Traité de l'argumentation: La nouvelle rhétorique* (Treatise on Argumentation: The New Rhetoric), published in 1958. 【7】 In this work, they revived Aristotelian rhetoric, particularly its dialectic rooted in oratory and disputation, and established a theory that studies discourse "which aims to provoke or increase the adherence of minds to the theses presented for their assent" 【8】. Argumentation here is not the formal logical proof that proceeds from premises to necessary conclusions, but any discourse that addresses a rational being and seeks to gain their adherence or modify their convictions. It is thus not concerned with absolute truth, but with what is acceptable or rejectable within a specific social and cultural context, and what can lead to "adhesion."

The theory of argumentation rests on a set of operational concepts, the most important being the "**audience**" (*auditoire*), which is the axis around which the persuasive act revolves. The argumentative speaker constructs their discourse based on the theses, values, and beliefs they assume their audience accepts—these are called "starting points of argumentation" or "premises." The audience is divided into a particular audience and a universal audience representing general reason. It can be said that Qur'anic discourse, in its pursuit of persuasion, addresses both types: it addresses its immediate audience (the Meccan polytheists) relying on their linguistic and social premises, while simultaneously directing its discourse to the human being *qua* human being—the universal audience—through shared rational and innate structures. Perelman states: "Every argumentation develops in dependence on the audience it is supposed to influence" 【9】.

Alongside argumentation comes the concept of "**modes**" or "**argumentative forms**," which are not mere ornaments but "evoke a particular vision of things and create a new image in thought by relying on resemblance, connection, or opposition" 【10】. Metaphor, metonymy, figurative language, and emphatic devices all become, in this theory, effective persuasive and argumentative tools that contribute to reshaping the receiver's vision. From this perspective, the rhetoric of persuasion, as adopted in this research, is the study concerned with revealing how linguistic and rhetorical energies (at the phonetic, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and imagistic levels) are employed as argumentative strategies targeting the receiver and responding to their horizon of expectations—not merely to convey a message, but to create a state of conviction and profound impact that changes behavior and visions. This makes rhetorical-argumentative analysis an effective tool for uncovering the secrets of inimitability in Qur'anic discourse.

Section Two: Surah Al-Ma'un – A Rhetorical-Argumentative Analysis of Persuasive Discourse

Surah Al-Ma'un, despite its brevity, represents a unique model for rhetorical-argumentative study. It consists of seven short verses, yet it contains a high density of stylistic and semantic

elements and presents an integrated persuasive discourse that redefines concepts and exposes the falsity of claims. It is quintessentially a Meccan discourse, addressing both the mind and the conscience simultaneously, seeking to shake the receiver's consciousness violently and transform them from a state of passivity and superficial belief to one of deep questioning and behavioral change. We will analyze the surah across its various linguistic and rhetorical levels, revealing the argumentative and persuasive dimensions of each.

First: The Phonetic and Rhythmic Level – The Persuasive Shaping of Hearing

Sound in Qur'anic discourse has a function that transcends musical ornamentation to become a bearer of meaning, a director of emotion, and an active participant in constructing the persuasive argument. In Surah Al-Ma'un, we find a masterful deployment of the acoustic fabric, where sounds, syllables, and rhythms synergize to create a profound psychological and persuasive effect.

1. The Oath Structure and the Sound of Negation – The Shocking Rhythm

The surah begins with a direct address to the Prophet (PBUH), preceded by an implied oath and an interrogative of denial: *"Have you seen the one who denies the Recompense?"* [Al-Ma'un: 1]. The sound of the open glottal stop (hamzah) in *"Ara'ayta"* is a sharp, explosive sound that opens the surah to awaken the listener from their heedlessness and forcefully draw them into the message's content. This interrogative is not a genuine request for visual sight, but an interrogative of wonder, denial, and intimidation, containing an implicit argument: the case of this denier is so manifestly clear that seeing it requires little reflection. It is a discourse that leads the receiver to participate in the process of discovery and judgment, rather than receiving a ready-made verdict. This is the essence of argumentative persuasion. This sharp sound is reinforced by its repetition in the second verse, *"For that is the one who drives away the orphan"* [Al-Ma'un: 2]. The particle *"fa"* (then/so) indicating immediate consequence, and the distal demonstrative *"dhalika"* (that) signifying either magnification or contempt, place this behavioral model under the microscope of criticism and disapprobation. Then comes the explicit oath at the end of the surah, concluding this shocking rhythm with another kind of rhythm—the rhythm of warning and threat: *"So woe to those who pray"* [Al-Ma'un: 4]. The word *"waylun"* (woe), with its tanween kasr and prolonged ya, is a heavy term filled with sorrow and ruin, its echoes evoking torment. Its occurrence after the causal *"fa"* linking their attributes to "woe" makes the phonetic rhythm itself a bearer of argument and a harbinger of inevitable consequence. The transition from the sharp hamzah of the interrogative to the prolonged ya of *"wayl,"* and from the *"fa"* of *"fadhalika"* to the *"fa"* of *"fawayl,"* creates a closed cyclical rhythm that begins with denunciation and ends with threat, making the receiver feel the inevitability of retribution.

2. Verse Endings (Fawasil) and Semantic Rhythm – From Openness to Restriction

The verse endings (*fawasil*) of the surah are based on a precise phonetic system linking rhythm and meaning. The first verses end with the elongated alif of openness: *"bi al-din"* (the Recompense), *"al-yatim"* (the orphan), *"al-miskin"* (the needy). This alif suggests the expanse and extension of the crime. Denial of religion, driving away the orphan, and failing to encourage feeding the needy are sins that do not stop at a limit but extend throughout the soul

and society as far as this prolonged sound extends. Then the rhythm suddenly shifts with the beginning of the discussion about the hypocritical worshippers, as the verses end with rhymes restricted by a silent nun or a geminated kasra-nun: "*li al-musallin*" (those who pray), "*sahun*" (heedless), "*yura'un*" (show off), "*al-ma'un*" (small kindnesses). This transition from openness to restriction, and from phonetic elongation to nasalization (*ghunnah*) and the silent nun, has a clear argumentative function: they are restricted by their hypocrisy and ostentation, confined within their narrow selves, in contrast to the expanse of the crime in the previous verses. Moreover, the nun in "*sahun*" and "*yura'un*" carries a nasal resonance that suggests concealment, secrecy, and overwhelming heedlessness, as if the sound of the word sketches the psychological traits of their characters: faint, closed sounds, contrasting with the explosion of denial and the blatant harshness of driving away the orphan. Sayyid Qutb comments on this rhythm: "The entire surah is a wonderful musical unit, intensifying gradually, its elements and tones converging to strike the senses with a single rhythm of a unique timbre, calling out the meaning of hypocrisy, pretension, and cruelty, in a moving musical form" [11]. This musical effect is, at its core, a persuasive tool operating at the subconscious level of the receiver.

Second: The Morphological and Syntactic Level – The Architecture of Persuasion through Structure

The morphological and syntactic construction of the surah is no less important than its phonetic construction. Indeed, Qur'anic composition (*al-nazm*), as understood by Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani, is what gives vocabulary its contextual and persuasive connotations. At this level, we find two main strategies: the deployment of morphological forms and the technique of syntactic deviation (*intizal*).

1. Connotations of Morphological Forms – Nominal and Verbal Forms between Permanence and Renewal

The morphological forms in the surah vary between nominal and verbal, and this variation has profound argumentative significance. The discourse begins with a past-tense verb that carries a renewed signification: "*Ara'ayta*" (Have you seen). Although the verb "*ra'a*" is in the past form, in this context it carries a renewed future signification, meaning "inform me" or "ponder," which gives the discourse vitality and immediate presence. It then moves to present-tense verbs: "*yukadhdhibu*" (denies), "*yadu*"* (*drives away*), "*yahuddu*"* (*encourages*) in verses (1-3). *The present tense here does not only denote the present but also continuity, renewal, and entrenched habit. Denial of religion is not a fleeting act but an ongoing behavior ingrained in the agent's character, and this continuity justifies the severity of denunciation and the power of the subsequent threat. It is a description of the essence of the personality, not a passing action. Al-Farra' explains *yadu" as: "He drives the orphan away from their right with violent pushing" [12], and al-Zamakhshari confirms that "the ya in (yadu`) is for continuity and repetition" [13].*

In contrast, the description of the hypocritical worshippers comes in the form of active participles: "*sahun*" (heedless), "*yura'un*" (show off), "*mani'un*" (preventers). The active participle form here, as well as the implied complements "about their prayer" and "small

kindnesses," indicates stability and entrenchment in these blameworthy traits. Heedlessness regarding prayer is not a transient lapse but a settled attribute, as is ostentation and the prevention of good. Ibn Qutaybah interprets *"sahun"* as: "heedless of their prayer, not caring about it" [14]. The transition from verbal forms indicating renewal to nominal forms indicating permanence constitutes an ascending argumentative line: these are not merely doers of evil deeds but are characterized by these vices—they are part of their very structure. This gradation from verb to settled attribute is a gradation in constructing moral condemnation, and thus in building the persuasive argument that seeks to activate psychological disgust toward this human model.

2. Syntactic Deviation – The Strategy of Surprise and Reframing

The secret of the surah's persuasive eloquence lies in its syntactic construction based on "deviation" or "departure from the norm." The Qur'anic text here violates the linguistic and cognitive horizon of expectation of the receiver, and this violation is the crux of the persuasive operation; it forces the receiver to reconsider their premises and perceptions.

This deviation begins in the first verse. The receiver who hears the interrogative *"Have you seen the one who denies the Recompense?"* expects an answer describing this denier or mentioning their fate. But the answer comes as a surprising contradiction of all expectations: *"For that is the one who drives away the orphan (2) And does not encourage the feeding of the needy (3)."* Denial of religion, a doctrinal stance, is directly linked to aggressive social behavior toward the vulnerable. This link is not a direct logical one in the receiver's mind, which separates belief from behavior, but the text imposes it with the force of the causal *"fa"* in *"fadhalika,"* making cruel social behavior a definition of denial of religion, indeed its material embodiment. This argumentative statement is a form of "reframing" the very concept of religion: religion is not merely rituals or heartfelt belief but an ethical-social system, and denying it means negating this system and embodying its opposite in reality. This deviation creates a cognitive shock in the receiver, prompting them to question their naive conception of religion and faith.

This deviation reaches its peak in the second section of the surah, where the receiver, after hearing about those harsh individuals, has been prepared to hear a description of the righteous believers, or at least praise for the worshippers. The text begins with *"So woe to those who pray"* [Al-Ma'un: 4], and here is the great surprise. The word *"al-musallin"* (those who pray) in Arab-Islamic culture is loaded with profoundly positive connotations, associated with goodness, righteousness, and piety. When the receiver hears the threat of woe directed specifically at this group, confusion and a seismic shift in expectations occur. The receiver finds themselves facing a dangerous exception to the rule they are accustomed to. But they soon discover, with the attributes mentioned afterward, that the definite article *"al"* in *"al-musallin"* is not for generality but for mental specification (*'ahd dhihni*), whose referent is defined by the following attributes—that is, it is a relative *"al"* meaning "those who are about their prayer heedless." This discovery occurs through an interactive process between text and receiver, where the receiver participates in discovering the restriction and making an exception for the true worshippers. Fakhr al-Din al-Razi states: "Know that His saying, (those

who are about their prayer heedless), functions as an attribute for His saying, (those who pray), so it is as if He said: Woe to those who pray, who are about their prayer heedless" [15] . This process makes the receiver a partner in constructing meaning, deepening its persuasive impact; they themselves have realized that the threat is not for worshippers in general but for a specific subset, prompting them to self-examination: "Am I one of those true worshippers, or am I included in this threat?" It is an argumentative strategy based on implicating the receiver and fostering self-interrogation.

Third: The Semantic and Pragmatic Level – Mechanisms of Imagery and Argumentation

At the semantic level, a set of mechanisms converges to construct the persuasive discourse, most notably: contrast-based imagery, the technique of pronoun shifts, and argumentation through counter-example.

1. Imagery through Contrast and the Creation of Value-Based Binaries

The surah constructs its semantic framework on sharp antithetical binaries, emanating from the central image of the hypocritical and arrogant human being. Opposed to the "orphan" and the "needy," who represent the peak of vulnerability and need, stand "the one who denies the Recompense" and "the hypocritical worshippers," who represent cruelty, heedlessness, and ostentation. This binary is not mere description but a profound moral argument: the spotlight is cast on human vulnerability embodied in the orphan and the needy—symbols of brokenness and need for mercy—and then the cruelty of the pretender to faith is highlighted, who not only fails to help but goes beyond that to *driving away* the orphan, pushing them with violence and humiliation. [16]

This contrast is also manifested within the characters of the worshippers themselves. They stand for prayer, in a scene presumed to be one of humility and connection to God, but they are in reality *heedless* of it, oblivious to its spirit and purposes. [17] They *show off* with their deeds, meaning their prayer, which should be sincere to God, has become a means of gaining reputation and praise. [18] This contrast between appearance (prayer) and reality (heedlessness and ostentation) is an argumentative image that exposes their falsity and strips their hypocrisy bare. The Qur'an expresses this contradiction using the active participle form "*yura'un*" (they show off), which carries connotations of artificiality and pretension. This contrast-based imagery not only describes reality but creates an "argumentative metaphor" that enables the receiver to see hypocrisy for what it is, thus driving them to detest and shun it. Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani, in his analysis of Qur'anic imagery, says: "Know that when you reflect upon yourself, you realize that among images are those that fill you with intimacy and joy, and among them are those that stir in you grief and desolation, and among them are those that rouse your courage and ardor, and among them are those that move you to tenderness and mercy" [19] . This is the secret behind why Qur'anic imagery was a sign of persuasion and influence.

2. The Strategy of Pronoun Shifts – From Direct Address to Absence

The deployment of pronouns in the surah is a noteworthy argumentative strategy. The discourse begins with a direct address to the Prophet (PBUH) with the second-person suffix *"ka"* in *"Ara'ayta."* This direct address makes the Prophet a witness to the crime and a determiner of the judgment, adding a dramatic scenography to the situation, and implicating the indirect listener (everyone who hears the verse) in this scene, making them also a witness and emotional participant.

Then the discourse abruptly shifts from the mode of address to the mode of absence (*ghaybah*) with the pronouns *"alladhi"* (the one who) and *"hum"* (they). After establishing the stance of witnessing, the text proceeds to present the model of the deniers and hypocrites in the third person, as if they are being displayed on a stage for moral punishment. This absence achieves two argumentative goals: the first is generalization, as speaking in the third person means the judgment is not limited to a specific individual but includes everyone to whom these attributes apply in every time and place. The second is exclusion and contempt; speaking about someone in the third person in their (hypothetical) presence is a form of insult and belittlement, as if they are not worthy of direct address. This style places this human model in the dock, before the tribunal of human conscience represented by the Prophet, the believers, and all who hear the verses. They are absent, but their crime is present and exposed.

The discourse then returns to an indirect but even more intense form of confrontation, in His saying *"yura'un"* (they show off). The verb *"yura'un"* does not require an explicit object, but the implied meaning is: "they show off to people." They live through people's eyes; their entire existence is contingent on the gaze of others. This confrontation through describing their inner motives is more eloquent than any direct address. It reveals what their breasts conceal, and this revelation in itself is the conclusive argument that the receiver cannot but acquiesce to, because they see in it an image that may apply to themselves or to a reality they know, instilling awe and impact.

3. Argumentation through Counter-Example – Defining Faith by Negating Its Opposite

The overarching persuasive strategy in the surah is to define "denial of religion" and "true worship" not by stating their positive limits but by stating their opposites. It is a strategy of "definition through opposition," which falls under what is termed in argumentative rhetoric as "argumentation by contraries." Instead of saying: The believer is the one who shows mercy to the orphan and feeds the needy, it said: The denier of religion is the one who drives away the orphan and does not encourage feeding the needy. And instead of saying: The sincere worshipper is the one who is humble in prayer and seeks God's countenance, it said: *"So woe to those who pray, who are about their prayer heedless, who show off."* This rhetorical style is more persuasive than direct declarative style for several reasons:

First, it creates a state of shock and intellectual provocation, as previously explained. Second, it moves the matter from the level of abstraction to the level of embodiment; instead of talking about faith as a theoretical value, it makes it a visible and tangible behavioral practice. Third, intimidation through the opposite is more compelling in driving action than

encouragement through the original. Describing this miserable human model—the hypocritical, cruel, miserly, pretentious person—and linking it to divine threat ("*wayl*") is a stronger incentive for the receiver to disassociate from these traits and seek their opposites. The receiver finds themselves driven, almost involuntarily, to say: "I am not like that." This negation of the negative model is the first step toward adopting the positive model. Thus, persuasion is achieved not through imposing an idea but by pushing the receiver to discover it themselves. This is the pinnacle of the rhetorical-persuasive act depicted by Qur'anic discourse in this concise yet eloquent surah.

Conclusion: Research Findings

After this analytical journey into the mechanisms of the rhetoric of persuasion in Qur'anic discourse, through the model of Surah Al-Ma'un, we can arrive at a set of important findings:

1. **Persuasive Rhetoric as an Integrative Methodology:** The research has proven that reading Qur'anic discourse from the perspective of the "rhetoric of persuasion," which invests in the achievements of Arabic rhetoric (composition, imagery, rhythm) and the tools of the New Rhetoric (argumentation, audience, adherence), opens a fertile horizon for uncovering deeper layers of Qur'anic inimitability, transcending the purely aesthetic dimension to reveal mechanisms of influence and transformation.
2. **Functional Synergy of Linguistic Levels:** The analysis of Surah Al-Ma'un revealed that persuasion is not achieved through a single linguistic level but through the synergy and integration of all levels. The sharp and constrained phonetic rhythm serves the connotations of threat and subjugation; nominal and verbal morphological forms depict the permanence and renewal of vice; syntactic deviations (linking denial to behavior, and threatening worshippers) produce cognitive shock and reframe concepts; and semantic imagery through contrast creates impactful value binaries. This synergy is what gives the discourse its immense persuasive power.
3. **The Strategy of Redefinition through Deviation:** The essence of the persuasive strategy in the surah is "redefinition" through deviation from the horizon of expectation. The text redefines "denial of religion" by linking it to harsh social practice, and redefines "blameworthy worshippers" by associating them with heedlessness, ostentation, and preventing good. Through this strategy, the discourse does not merely present new information but works to displace the receiver from their preconceived notions and naive assumptions, pushing them to construct a newer, deeper, and more behaviorally relevant understanding.
4. **The Positivity and Testimony of the Receiver:** Qur'anic discourse involves the receiver in building the argument through the interrogative "*Ara'ayta*" (Have you seen), making them a witness and participant in discovering the truth, not a passive recipient. Through deviations, the receiver is left the opportunity to discover the restrictions and meanings themselves, making the process of conviction more firmly rooted because it appears to emanate from within them.
5. **Universality and Presentness Together:** The surah addresses its immediate Meccan audience but transcends it to every human being. The models it presents (the arrogant

cruel one, the hypocritical ostentatious one) are recurring human archetypes, and the persuasive mechanisms used (such as shock, contrast, and redefinition) address the structure of the human mind and conscience in general, granting Qur'anic discourse its timelessness and its enduring power of persuasion across the ages.

In conclusion, it can be said that Surah Al-Ma'un, despite its brevity and density, offers a profound lesson in the art of Qur'anic persuasion. It is not merely verses to be recited, but an integrated rhetorical strategy that diagnoses the disease (hypocrisy, cruelty, and practical denial of religion) and describes it with tools that make it repulsive and loathsome, then leaves the receiver to seek the cure themselves (compassionate faith, sincere worship, and social solidarity). Herein lies the greatness of the miracle: in transforming discourse into action, and the word into life.

Footnotes

[1] See: Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, *Traité de l'argumentation: La nouvelle rhétorique*, Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1958. Translated into Arabic as *Musannaf fi al-Hijaj: al-Balaghah al-Jadidah*, trans. Abd al-Rahman Bouali and Muhammad Mishbal, Dar al-Kitab al-Jadid al-Muttahidah, Beirut, 1st ed., 2014. The content referenced is a summary of the spirit of Perelman's theory that argumentation aims to gain the audience's adherence to the theses presented.

[2] See: Muhammad al-Omari, *al-Balaghah al-Jadidah bayna al-Takhyil wa al-Tadawul* (The New Rhetoric between Imagining and Pragmatics), Dar Ifriqiya al-Sharq, Morocco, 2005. The phrase is paraphrased.

[3] Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani, *Dala'il al-I'jaz fi 'Ilm al-Ma'ani* (Evidences of Inimitability in the Science of Meanings), ed. Mahmoud Muhammad Shakir, Al-Madani Press, Cairo, 3rd ed., 1992, p. 49. The definition of composition appears in similar wording in multiple places.

[4] Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani, *Dala'il al-I'jaz*, same source, p. 106 (adapted). The text appears as: "It is a chapter of abundant benefits, numerous beauties, vast scope, and distant aim. It never ceases to create for you new forms of excellence and lead you to subtleties."

[5] Yusuf ibn Abi Bakr al-Sakkaki, *Miftah al-'Ulum* (The Key to Sciences), ed. Na'im Zarzour, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 2nd ed., 1987, p. 162. The phrase is paraphrased.

[6] Abu Uthman Amr ibn Bahr al-Jahiz, *al-Bayan wa al-Tabyin* (Eloquence and Clarification), ed. Abd al-Salam Harun, Maktabat al-Khanji, Cairo, 7th ed., 1998, vol. 1, p. 92 (adapted).

[7] Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, *Traité de l'argumentation*, same source.

[8] See: same source, pp. 27-28.

[9] See: same source.

[10] Abd al-Rahman Bouali, "Madkhal ila al-Balaghah al-Hijajiyah" (Introduction to Argumentative Rhetoric), *Majalat 'Alamat*, Morocco, no. 16, 2001, p. 121 (adapted).

[11] Sayyid Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* (In the Shade of the Qur'an), Dar al-Shorouk, Cairo, 35th ed., 2004, vol. 6, p. 3996.

[12] Yahya ibn Ziyad al-Farra', *Ma'ani al-Qur'an* (Meanings of the Qur'an), ed. Ahmad Yusuf al-Najati and Muhammad Ali al-Najjar, Dar al-Misriyyah li al-Ta'lif wa al-Tarjamah, Cairo, 1st ed., [n.d.], vol. 3, p. 368 (adapted). Al-Farra' interpreted "yadu`" as violent pushing.

[13] Jar Allah al-Zamakhshari, *al-Kashshaf 'an Haqa'iq al-Tanzil wa 'Uyun al-Aqawil fi Wujuh al-Ta'wil* (The Unveiler of the Realities of Revelation), ed. Adel Ahmad Abd al-Mawjud et al., Maktabat al-'Ubaykan, Riyadh, 1st ed., 1998, vol. 6, p. 735 (adapted).

[14] Abu Muhammad Abd Allah ibn Muslim ibn Qutaybah al-Dinawari, *Tafsir Gharib al-Qur'an* (Interpretation of the Unfamiliar in the Qur'an), ed. Ahmad Saqr, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1st ed., 1398 AH/1978 AD, p. 543 (adapted). Ibn Qutaybah interpreted "sahun" as "heedless."

[15] Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, *Mafatih al-Ghayb (al-Tafsir al-Kabir)* (Keys to the Unseen – The Great Commentary), Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, Beirut, 3rd ed., 2000, vol. 32, p. 313.

[16] See: Abu Ubaydah Ma'mar ibn al-Muthanna, *Majaz al-Qur'an* (The Figurative Language of the Qur'an), ed. Muhammad Fu'ad Sezgin, Maktabat al-Khanji, Cairo, [n.d.], vol. 2, p. 298. He interpreted "yadu`" as pushing and oppression.

[17] See: Ibn Qutaybah, *Tafsir Gharib al-Qur'an*, same source, p. 543.

[18] See: al-Farra', *Ma'ani al-Qur'an*, same source, vol. 3, p. 369.

[19] Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani, *Asrar al-Balaghah* (Secrets of Eloquence), ed. Mahmoud Muhammad Shakir, Al-Madani Press, Cairo, 1st ed., 1991, p. 216 (adapted). The phrase is a summary of al-Jurjani's doctrine on the impact of rhetorical imagery on the soul.

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