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## A STYLISTIC STUDY OF ANTITHETICAL PARALLELISM IN THE QUR'ĀN

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### Abstract

*The language and style of the Qur'ān are a unique, wondrous and inimitable linguistic compendium. It is replete with remarkable and grandiose styles and expressions. Parallelism, and its various sub-types, constitute a generously employed communicative and rhetorical linguistic expression in the Qur'ān. This paper investigated grammatical antithetical parallelisms in the Qur'ān to demonstrate how they function to establish meaning connection. Twenty-one samples were taken from the Qur'ān and analysed using the SPCA syntactic model of Systemic Functional Linguistics. Findings revealed that parallelisms in the Qur'ān are knitted in two main clauses (compound sentences), complex and compound-complex sentences yoked together in equivalent structures to express diverse themes such as belief versus disbelief, reward versus punishment, uprightness versus evil, monotheism versus polytheism, attributes, qualities and descriptions of Allah, etc. The findings also revealed that the parallel structures are constructed in the simple present tense, producing meaningful connection that expresses the themes of universal truth, scientific facts and legislative components in Islam that entrench communal harmony and peaceful co-existence. In conclusion, the paper highlights the rhetorical appeal that is conveyed by these parallel structures.*

**Keywords:** *stylistics, Qur'ān, parallelism, rhetorical appeal, etc.*

### Introduction

Stylistics, the meeting point between linguistics and literature, emerged in the twentieth century as an academic discipline that replaced and expanded the frontiers of rhetoric. As a sub-field of linguistics, stylistics is interested in the formal characteristics of language used in texts, spoken or written, literary or non-literary texts. This suggests that the preferred object of stylistics is not literature alone, popular non-canonical writings are equally the domains of modern stylistics.

Crystal and Davy (1969), Short (1996), Simpson (2004), Leech (2008), and Jefferies and McIntyre (2010) assert the central concern of stylistics is the application of modern linguistic tools in the description and analysis of literary and non-literary texts for empirical interpretation. Against this background, Kates (2001) claims that the goal of stylistics analysis is not merely to describe the former characteristics of text, but also 'to show their functional significance for the interpretation of the text...' (pp. 372-373). In other words, the choice of a linguistic option among alternative expressions or the choice of deviant forms that deliberately violate the pre-set rules of



linguistic code has an underlining rhetorical appeal and stylistic effect that signposts the intended message of the writer.

Thus, over the decades, the domain of stylistics, the linguistic study of style, has been enriched and ‘fortified’ by insights, discoveries and concepts from supporting disciplines, models from linguistics and literary theories. For instance, the concept of parallelism is a ready-made linguistic principle and method that is appropriated by the stylistician in the description and analysis of texts.

Parallelism is one of the distinctive features that is employed in oral and written communication, literary and non-literary texts. It is an exquisite manner of expression that jolts the mind of the listener/reader and forces him/her to investigate the meaning connection in the repetitive structures. As a stylo-rhetorical device, parallelism is a core aspect or feature of stylistic studies. Both deviation and parallelism are linguistic resources through which foregrounding is achieved in textual composition. It was the Prague School of Linguistics that deposited the concept of foregrounding into the field of poetics as a stylistic toolkit to defamiliarise the linguistic process to draw the attention of the reader to a significant aesthetic cum semantic implication (Leech and Short 2007; Leech 2008).

Unlike deviation where the writer/poet disrupts or violates the pre-set rules of language for aesthetic and rhetorical purposes, in parallelism, the speaker/writer persistently limits himself/herself to the same or similar linguistic patterns or options even though the language possesses endless linguistic possibilities of choices through which he/she can select from. Parallel linguistic structures that are singled out for the attention of the reader are foregrounded elements that have perceptual prominence (Short 1996), and discernible rhetorical figure that produces original meaning (Leech and Short 2007). They establish a meaningful connection (Short 1996), a connection of similarity and contrast (Simpson, 2004; Leech and Short, 2007; Jeffrey and McIntyre, 2010; Ogunsiyi and Aluya, 2022).

Simply put, therefore, parallelism is a kind of linguistic repetition, aptly described by Crystal (2004) as “The use of pair sounds, words or constructions” (p. 446). Crystal’s view suggests that parallelism is the repetition of sounds, words, phrases, clauses and sentences yoked together in equivalent structures to create a scheme of balance that has rhythmic and rhetorical appeal to the listener or reader. This means that parallelism is anchored on the principle of equivalence (Corbett, 1971; Kates, 2001) or structural equivalence (Leech & Short, 2007) and is made more prominent through the adept use of alliteration (Leech, 1969).

As a form of textual production that arises as a result of the repetition of structures, Fabb (1997) groups all instances of parallelism at all linguistic levels into two: semantic parallelism and structural parallelism. Semantic parallelism explores the meaning properties of the parallel structure. In other words, semantic parallelism examines the equivalent meaning of components between two sections of a text. Put differently, it is when two or more different sections of a text have the same interpretation of the component of meaning. In such an instance, one meaning (one



part of the parallel structure) reinforces the other, or one part expands the meaning of the other. This is what Ojaide (1996) refers to as the additive function of parallelism.

Quirk, et al (1985) aver that structural parallelism occurs when neighbouring sentences share grammatical features of tense, aspect, and number among sentences or word order to give a strong impression of connectivity. To Fabb (1997), cited by Maledo (2019), structural parallelism displays the sameness or equivalence of two sections/parts of a text at the level of structure or pattern. That is, structural parallelism is attained or achieved when similar or identical sounds, words, phrases, clauses and sentences of equal grammatical status are connected in parallel grammatical structures. This implies that structural parallelism occurs at the phonological, morphological, graphological, syntactic linguistic levels (Leech, 1969; Jeffrey & McIntyre, 2010; and Abdul-Raof, 2018; Maledo, 2019). This paper investigates syntactic parallelism in the Quran, with a major focus on antithetical parallelism, a sub-set of syntactic parallelism.

Syntactic parallelism or grammatical parallelism (Leech, 1969; Corbett, 1971; Dror, 2017) creates structural repetitive patterns between phrases, clauses and sentences. Dror (2017) identifies three types of syntactic parallelism. They are synonymous, antithetic and synthetic. Citing Allan (1996), Maledo (2019) classifies syntactic parallelism into the following types: synonymous, antithetic, constructive, and climatic parallelism. However, Mahdi and Khadim (2018) identify six types of syntactic parallelism: synonymous, synthetic, antithetic, climatic, eclectic and emphatic parallelisms. Due to space constraints, only antithetical parallelism, the kernel of this paper, will be briefly defined.

**Antithetic parallelism** shows the contrast between the first and second parallel structures. That is, the second parallel structure exhibits disparity or difference in the assertion expressed in the first structure. Simply put, the second structure denies or rejects the notion of the first parallel statement. Antithetic parallelism is a widely used parallelism type in the Qur'an, often with appealing and telling rhetorical functions. Mainly, parallel constructions function to establish or produce meaning connection, a connection of similarity and contrast. This is what Short (1996) refers to parallelism rule. Among the functions, Leech (1969) avers, is that parallelism signals an emotive force when more than two phrases or clauses of identical patterns are yoked together, and that schematic balancing which is the hallmark of parallel structures produces 'the elaboration of form that inevitably brings an elaboration of meaning' (Leech and Short 2007, p. 21)

According to Jefferies and McIntyre (2010), 'parallelism reinforces the positive evaluation of the propositional content' (p. 33) that compels the reader to look for contrastive meaning connection or link between the parallel structures. Dror (2017) adds that complete grammatical parallelism can enhance the effectiveness of the distinction between two opposing sides. In order words, antithetical parallelism indicates the merit, worth or value of one group over the other. Parallelism is geared towards an effective description of ideas, creates rhetorical emphasis and gives clarity of message and thematic focus and amplifies the subject matter (Ogunsiji and Aluya (2022). In some instances, the rhythmic power of a stretch of structures produces musicality that



is pleasurable or reinforces a melancholy mood. And finally, parallelism helps create cohesive ties in texts, which is regarded as an additive function (Ojaide, 1996).

### **Research Objective**

This paper investigates antithetical parallelism in the Qur'ān.

### **Research Question**

How and why antithetical parallelism is employed in the Qur'ān?

### **Statement of the Problem**

As a sub-type of foregrounding, parallelism is a textual property and a product of linguistic subtlety through which writers create a meaningful connection. Experience has shown that many a reader fails to ponder over the depth of meaning that exists between parallel structures and lacks the linguistic skills to unravel and interpret the rhetorical functions and core message/theme buried in parallel constructions, particularly in the Qur'ān. The present study sensitizes the readers to identifying antithetical parallelisms and providing the techniques and analysis that would guide them to fully interpret and understand the meaning of antithetical parallelisms in the Qur'ān.

### **Significance of the Study**

The present research effort adds to the existing body of knowledge on parallelism. It provides additional information on the works of Dror (2017) and Mahdi and Khadim (2018), Alharbi (2021) who have investigated parallelism in the Qur'ān. However, the present study is elaborately conceived as it analyses many samples from the Qur'ān and explains the rhetorical functions behind the usage of each sample of the antithetical parallelism.

## **Literature Review**

Numerous works have been written on Qur'anic linguistics which explicates and interpret the Qur'ān using the parameters and tools of modern linguistics. Such works include von Deffon (1981) Philip (2005), El-Awa (2006), Ushama (2013), Saeh (2015), Dror (2017), Mahdi and Khadim, 2018; Abdul-Rauf (2018), Alharbi (2021). However, few of these works dwell extensively on the subject of parallelism. While Dror (2017) and Mahdi and Khadim (2018) fully examine parallelism in the Quran, AbdulRauf (2018) and Alharbi (2021) scantily discuss parallelism. In addition, other related works do not examine parallelism in the Quran, but whose insights and findings could be used to buttress studies on parallelism in the Quran. Such works include Abdurraheem (2010), Okunowo (2012), Maledo (2019) and Ogunsiji and Aluya (2021).

von Deffon (1981) investigates the form, language and style of the Qur'ān. He avers that the literary form of the Qur'ān can be broadly grouped into prose and poetry but dwells extensively on the lexical features of the Qur'ān which are non-Arabic in origin. He classifies these non-Arabic words as loanwords that are borrowed from languages such as Greek, Persian, Turkish and Abyssinian. He asserts further that the sound devices of the Qur'ān contain poetic features like rhyme, rhythm and other phonetic features, which, however, does not make the Qur'ān be



described as poetry. Throughout this study, parallelism as a stylistic feature of the Qur'ān is not examined.

In his linguistic exploration of the Qur'ān, Philips (2005) examines some key linguistic concepts which are germane and crucial to the correct and accurate exegesis of the Qur'ān. These key linguistic terms, which he identifies as *āmm* (general), *khāṣṣ* (specific), *muṭlaq* (absolute), *muqayyad* (qualified), *mantūq* (stated) and *mafḥūm* (implied), are replete in the Qur'ān and have diverse semantic implications that are used to express different shades of meaning. He points out that a profound knowledge and understanding of these key linguistic items, based on the features listed above, would aid a proper understanding of the Qur'ān. Though the work does not examine parallelism, the finding of the study will be useful in our analysis of parallelistic structures in the Qur'ān.

In the same vein, Ushama (2013) employs modern descriptive linguistic tools to analyse the literary and linguistic style of the Qur'ān. In this work, an in-depth study of the unique literary Qur'ānic style is explored. Specifically, the author discusses significant linguistic styles such as the rhetorical import of the abbreviated letters in the Qur'ān, maxims, metaphors, narrative techniques of the Qur'ān, the linguistic implication of oaths, parables, similes, etc. However, parallelism is not treated, nor mentioned in his work.

Similarly, Abdul-Rauf (2018) embarks on a full-scale linguistic analysis of the Qur'ān. It is a comprehensive book on Qur'ān discourse. The author provides insights and principles from modern descriptive linguistics to account for useful information and valid statements on the syntactic, semantic and stylistic features of the Qur'ān as they relate to the exegesis of the Qur'ān. As comprehensive as the book is on the linguistic exploration of the Qur'ān, the author does not discuss parallelism, a common and widely used linguistic style. The only reference to parallelism in the book is on page 208 where the author tersely defines it and cites instances where it occurs in the Qur'ān, alongside other rhetorical features.

Dror (2017), Mahdi and Khadim (2018) and Alharbi (2021) are journal articles that investigate parallelism in the Qur'ān, though Alharbi is not as detailed as the first two. Dror (2017) focuses on grammatical parallelism in the Qur'ān, using a grammatical pattern of analysis of **A B C D E F G**, etc. pattern to account for the syntactic relations between the parallel structures instead of Subject, Verb Object and Adverb (**SVOA**) or Subject, predicator, Complement and Adjunct (**SPCA**) grammatical pattern. He majorly identifies three relationships that exist between two parallel structures. The relationships are synonymous, synthetic and antithetical parallelisms. However, antithetical parallelism dominates his analysis, with a sprinkle of synonymous and synthetic parallelisms. In addition, his analysis of antithetical parallelism addresses topics such as patterns of behaviour between believers and non-believers, parallelisms describing Allah's might, and parallel structures expressing monotheism versus polytheism and God versus Devil, etc.

Mahdi and Khadim (2018) investigate the use of parallelism in the last three short chapters of Qur'ān: Sūratu-n-Nās, Sūratu'l-Falaqq and Sūratu'l-Ikhlāṣ. Their analysis, which focuses on





these three chapters alone, identifies six types of parallelism that are employed in these three short *suwar* (chapters). These parallelism types are syntactic parallelism: synonymous, synthetic, antithetic, climatic, eclectic and emphatic parallelisms. In addition, their analysis is not based on any theoretical model but their findings show that parallelism is a major characteristic of all religious texts, an important linguistic tool employed in the Qur'ān to communicate to people to influence the reading and reasoning process of the readers to provoke deep understanding of the Qur'ānic text.

Unlike Dror (2017) and Mahdi and Khadim (2018), Alharbi's (2021) paper does not fully concentrate on parallelism. He merely cites parallelism as one of the six techniques through which linguistic appropriateness is achieved in the Qur'ānic text. Of the numerous examples of parallelism in the Qur'ān, Alharbi gives only three examples to demonstrate that its employment in the Qur'ān is a property of textuality that relates ideas together through appropriate choice of lexical items and intra-sentential and inter-sentential mechanisms. Thus, parallelism is not given a profound treatment in his paper. Such a profound treatment of antithetical parallelism in the Qur'ān is the focus of this paper

### Methodology

The language and style of the Qur'ān are unique, wondrous, incomparable and miraculous (Hitti, 2002, Ushama 2013). The Qur'ān manifests several remarkable styles that are not present in some religious scriptures (Ushama, 2013). This assertion lends credence to the linguistic, rhetorical and eloquent inimitability of the Qur'ān. Thus, the linguistic and literary stylistic features of the Qur'ān are indisputably rich and unique, and one such stylistic feature is linguistic parallelism.

Parallelism is adroitly woven into the fabric of the Qur'ān as a discursive strategy. Thus, data for this study are drawn from the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān is a mine of parallelisms as it contains generous examples of parallelism types mentioned by Mahdi and Khadim (2018) above. However, for the scope of this paper, the analysis will mainly focus on antithetical parallelisms in the Qur'ān. Dror (2017) asserts that two types of antithetical grammatical parallelism are discernable in the Qur'ān: incomplete grammatical parallelism and complete grammatical parallelism. This assertion has been earlier echoed by Corbett (1971) who says antithesis resides in words, ideas or both. For this analysis, we shall focus on complete antithetical grammatical parallelisms that are expressed both in words and ideas to give a complete contrast.

For analysis, each verse to be analysed will be transliterated and its English translation rendered. It is the English translation that will be analysed using Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, precisely the Scale and Category Grammar of SPCA. Employing the SPCA analytical model is a marked difference from Dror's (2017) **A B C D E F**, etc pattern, which does not align with any grammatical model.





(4) Help one another in goodness and piety, and do not help one another in sin and aggression.

This compound, imperative jussive sentence that is couched in antithetical parallelism is an expression of command, mandating humanity to always indulge in good and pious deeds, while the second part of the parallel sentence, crafted in negativity dissuades humanity from wrongdoings. This sentence is attention-catching as it provokes the reader to ponder over and contrast the key lexical items: 'goodness' and 'sin'; 'piety' and 'sin' and 'aggression'. Other examples of parallelism relating to the theme of uprightness (goodness) and evil abound in the Qur'ān: **3:152; 91: 9-10; 24:26; 4: 85; 3:106; 39:38; 40:40.**

In other places of the Qur'ān, Allāh employed pairs of parallelistic structures to foreground His might and power on all human, non-human and cosmic creatures. First, in Qur'ān 3:26:

*Quli llāhumma mālika'l-mulki tu'tī'l-Mulka man tashā'u wa tamzi'u'l-Mulka miman tashā'u wa tu' izu man tashā'u wa tudhilu man tashā'u*, meaning "O Allāh, Owner of sovereignty

S P C C S P C C

(5) You give sovereignty to whom you will/ You take away sovereignty from whom you will

S P C S P C

(6) And you honour whom you will / You abase whom you will.

These two pairs of complete antithetical parallelism establish fundamental truths that ultimate and supreme power, authority and control belong to Allah alone. He is the One who enthrones, crowns and honours the leader he likes, and dethrones, debases and deflates, by His mighty decree and divine power, whom he wills. To reinforce these attributes and descriptions, and cast this awesome depiction in the heart of the conscious reader, Allah crafts the message in embedded clauses, main clauses and subordinate clauses, to set up powerful contrasting expressions. The rhetorical appeal of these highly foregrounded constructions is to jolt the attention of the reader over immaterial power and fleeting position. These parallel structures are pointers that Allah makes or mars, depending on His divine wishes.

Closely connected to Qur'ān 3: 26, is verse 27 of the same chapter. Again, two pairs of parallel structures are employed to focus on Allah's Divine Power and Unity as He causes the earth to rotate in a counterclockwise direction around its axis to cause day and night. Allah says:

S P C A S P C A

(7) You cause the night to enter into the day/ You cause the day to enter in the night

S P C A S P C A

(8) And You bring the living out of the dead / And You bring the dead out of the living





These complete antithetical grammatical structures challenge man to cogitate over the in-depth, complex and scientific knowledge involved as the day transformed into the night and the night transformed into the day, leading to the earth rotating around its orbits. This simple but complex alternation of the day and the night and the power to create and not create human lives, are picturesquely presented in marked parallelisms (Leech, 1969; 2008): (i) the two pairs have identical grammatical structures: SPCA, (ii) Corresponding pronoun 'You' in the clauses, (iii) equivalent present tense which expresses continuity and extension of the proposition into past and future, with no limitation.

This parallel construction, particularly sample 7, besides registering Allah as the Supreme Superintendent and 'Sculptor' of the Universe, further explains the divine orderliness and astronomic balancing of the heavenly bodies in the cosmos since the beginning of creation. Thus, the astronomic balancing of the heavenly bodies is stylistically presented in the syntactic balancing of the parallel construction. The unbroken continuity and celestial harmony are also stylistically depicted in the employment of unrestricted simple present tense, which further stresses the universal truth that a Supreme Being is in charge of the entire Universe. This argument is reinforced in the Qur'ān as Allah repeats the same parallel structure (i.e You cause the night ....) in other places of the Qur'ān **22:61; 31: 29; 35: 13 and 57: 6**. The cosmic relevance of the day and night in the natural ordering of human affairs is further enhanced, though in a slightly varied linguistic pattern, in other verses of the Qur'ān which are also couched in apt but short and succinct parallel structures. These examples are found in Qur'ān **74:33-34; 92: 1-2; 91:1-6, etc.**

Adjectives, gradable and non-gradable, are numerous employed in the Qur'ān text to vividly depict Allah's innumerable attributes, qualities, descriptions and characteristics. Examples of such attributes are *al-Ghaniy* the Sufficient, *al-Hamīd*, the Praised *al-Āzīz*, the Mighty, *al-Ḥakīm* the Wise, *al-Kabīr* the Great. However, the names and attributes attain more prominence and become foregrounded when they are honed and outlined in parallel structures. Such parallel examples are gleaned from passages of the Qur'ān. In Qur'ān 5 verse 98, Allah

says:

*'i'lamū 'anna llāha shadīdu 'l-<sup>c</sup> Iqābi wa 'anna llāha ghaḥfūru-r-raḥīm*

S P C S P C C

(9) Allah is Severe in punishment and (that) Allah is Forgiving, Merciful (5:98)

*'inna rabbaka ladhū Magfiratin wa dhū<sup>c</sup> Iqābin 'Ālīmīn*

S P C S P C

(10) ..... Your Lord is the Possessor of Forgiveness and (Your Lord is ) the Possessor of Painful Punishment (41:43)

*fa 'inna llaha yuḍilu man yashā'a wa yahdī man yashā'a.*

S P C C S P C C



(11) Verily, Allah sends astray whom He wills and (Allah) guides aright whom He wills (16:93)

*Yaghfiru liman yashā'u wa yu<sup>c</sup>adh-dhibu man yashā'u.*

S P C S P C

(12) He forgives whom He pleases and (He) punishes whom he pleases (48:14)

*Faman yuridi llahu 'an yahdiyahu yashraḥ ṣadrahu li'l-l'islām, faman yurid <sup>c</sup>an yuḍillahu yaj<sup>c</sup> al ṣadrahu ḍayyiqan ḥarajan.*

β α

(13) And whomever Allah intends to guide, He opens his breast to Islam,

β α

Whomever He intends to send astray, He makes his breast closed and constricted. (6:125)

In sentence 9, there is a slight variation in the parallel constructions. This an instance of incomplete antithetical parallelism because in the first clause, the Complement (C) component is made of Headword, 'severe' and the Qualifier 'in punishment', while in the second clause 'Forgiving' and 'Merciful' are two separate linguistic elements that both function as Complement (C). Yet, they almost function as parallel elements to achieve schematic balancing. Given the parallel construction of sentence 10, SPC, a complete antithetical parallelism is achieved that gives symmetrical attributes of Allah. This symmetrical description heightens the semantic import of **Qur'ān 42 verse 7: A party shall be in the garden, another party (shall be) in the burning fire.** Both sentences 9 and 10, pithy and punchy, reverberate the twin concept of Allah being the Custodian of forgiveness and the Custodian of punishment, a parallel linguistic attribute that runs through the texture of the Qur'ān.

In sample 11, the expressions 'Allah sends astray' and 'Allah guides aright', and in sample 12 the lexical items 'forgive' and 'punishes' are set in contrast to further underscore other unique attributes of Allah. These antithetical parallel sentences produce a schematic balancing that fills the heart of the reader with fear and reverence for Allah, the Almighty. These attributes are given a wider semantic and pragmatic focus in sample 13 to create textual cohesion among antithetical structures in 11, 12 and 13. This cohesion foregrounds the rhetorical appeal and communicative/perlocutionary effect divinely embedded in the structures. The perlocutionary effect is that Allah's supremacy and attributes are manifested in diverse ways: Striding on the path of truth and righteousness and sprinting on the valley of evil and destruction are subject to the power and control of Allah. These divine attributes are foregrounded in several verses of the Qur'ān, where they are equally presented in antithetical parallel constructions such as Qur'ān 40:40.

Closely related to the twin concept of forgiveness and punishment is the Qur'ān theological theme of reward and punishment. This theme is extensively reiterated in the Qur'ān and mostly presented in complete antithetical parallelism. A few examples are stated thus:

*Inna 'l- 'Abrāra lafī na<sup>c</sup>īmin wa inna 'l-Fujjāra lafī jahīmin*



S            P            A                            S            P            A

(14) The righteous will be in delight, /and the wicked will be in the blazing fire (82: 13-14)

*Yaoma nahshurul muttaqīna 'ila raḥmāni wafdan, wanasūqul mujrīmīna ila jahannama wirdan*

S                            P                            A            C

(15) And the garden shall be brought near to the pious /

S            P                            A                            C

and the fire shall be made manifest to the erring ones (19: 85-86)

These two examples and many others like them in the Qur'ān (**3:106; 17:8; 33:73; 101: 6-9; 92: 5-11**) are linguistic expressions through which Allah contrasts the theme of reward and punishment. Those who obey Allah's dictates and commands are the pious and righteous servants that will dwell in the delights of blissful gardens. The parallel structures are stylistically couched to draw the attention of a conscious reader to the meaningful connection between the theme of reward and punishment, denotatively marked by paradise and hellfire. The parallel structures are juxtaposed to compel righteous believers into obeying the dictates of Allah. This is the core information focus of most parallelisms in the Qur'ān.

Thus, knowledge of Allah's reward and punishment, power and control over His creatures will reinforce the forbearance and patience to always obey His commands and instructions. One such divine command is the one given in Qur'ān 16 verse 90 which is couched in complete antithetical parallelism. Allāh says:

*Inna llāha ya'muru bi'adli wa'l-lhsāni wa'ittā'i Dhi'l-Qurbā wayanhā 'anil-faḥshā'i wa'l-Munkar wa'l-Baghyi*

S            P            C                            C    C

(16) Surely Allah enjoins justice and kindness and giving dues to near relatives and

S            P            C                            C    C

He forbids lewdness and abomination and rebellion.

This short sentence is skillfully crafted in contrasting propositions to jolt the reader's mental alertness to the in-built divine message in the verse. In this verse, a complete antithetical parallelism *per se*, Allah yokes together three virtues (justice, kindness and giving dues to near relatives) that entrench a healthy and vibrant society with three vices (lewdness, abomination and rebellion) that ruin, dislocate and devastate a society. Here, the contrast produces an illocutionary act of admonishing that must be obeyed and practically demonstrated in all communities desirous of peaceful harmonious existence and continuous communal stability. As in all instances where Allah contrasts righteousness and evil, the simple present tense of the verbs 'enjoins' and 'forbids', which expresses a lack of restrictiveness and limitation in the propositional content of the actions in the sentence, establishes a meaning connection that produces a universal truth.



The legislative components of Islam are also adroitly woven into parallel structures. Islām invites humanity to critical thinking and sound intellectual reasoning; thus, some of its legislative components are couched in parallelism that compels a conscious and steady reader to look for the meaning connection in such legislative components. In enjoining war to the nascent Muslim community, a war of self-defence, the Qur'ān 2 verse 216 says:

*Kutiba 'alaykumu'l-Qitālu wahuwa kurhun llakum, wa'asā 'an takrahū shay'an wahuwa khayrun llakum, wa'asā 'an tuhibū shay'an wahuwa sharru llakum.*

(17) Fighting is enjoined on you, and it is an object of dislike.

|  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| $\alpha$   | $\beta$                         |
| <b>And it may be that you dislike a thing</b>                          | <b>while it is good for you</b> |
| $\alpha$   | $\beta$                         |
| <b>and it may be that you love something while it is evil for you.</b> |                                 |

The entire verse is quoted here but the parallel structure yoked together in complex sentences, occurs in the part of the verse that is in bold print. The semantics of the verb *kutiba* (meaning 'enjoined on you') implies the verse is a divine injunction to fight in self-defence, not a war of conquest or a war of material plunder (Ali, 2001). In giving out this command to the Muslims, Allah foregrounds the injunction by contrasting 'dislike' and 'love', 'goodness' and 'evil'. As a legislative injunction cast in the aesthetics of rhetorical appeal, Allah uses schematic balancing to effectively engage the Muslims convincingly and intellectually in carrying out His divine guidance by allowing them to visualise the negative consequences of not pursuing the war. Allah appeals to them knowing too well that disliking war would amount to *fitnah* (Qur'ān 2: 191) which Ali (2001) aptly describes as "affliction, distress, hardship, slaughter, misleading, or causing an error, seduction of faith by any means" (p.85)

In addition, Qur'ān 2: 275 is another illustration where parallelism is employed to foreground a legislative matter. In this verse, Allāh sharply contrasts trading and usury. He says: "wa aḥalla llāhul bay'a wa ḥarrama rribā".

(18)            S        P            C            S        P        C

Allāh has permitted trade and (Allāh) has forbidden usury

In this verse, cast in epigrammatic terseness, Allah sets trading and usury in binary opposition for utter condemnation of usury (*ribā*). *Ribā* or interest, which by its very nature creates selfishness and cruelty, hard-heartedness, money worship, etc. (Ali, 2001), kills the spirit of fellow feeling, sympathy and cooperation. It is therefore ruinous because it hinders social, economic, moral and spiritual progress. The meaning connection between the parallel structure is at the level of lexis: 'has permitted and 'has forbidden' and 'trade' and 'usury'. So, a discerning reader would digest the pragmatic turn of the illocutionary act of condemnation inherent in the verse. This condemnation is further stylistically amplified in the next verse, that is, Qur'ān 2:276, where Allāh says: "yamḥaqu llāhu rribā wa yurbī aṣ-sadaqāti".



S P C (S) P C

(19) Allāh destroys usury and (Allah) gives an increase to charities

Again, in the above verse, which reinforces Qur'ān 2: 275, Allāh uses another parallel structure, to reiterate His abhorrence and aversion for usury so that sincere and conscious Muslims and all adherents of humanity would distance themselves from *riba*. To attain this communicative appeal and perlocutionary effect, Allāh contrasts 'destroy' and 'increase' and 'usury' and 'increase in charities' to further impress on the psyche of the reader His complete loathsomeness for usury. Note also the symmetric balancing in the choice of the simple present tense 'destroys' and 'gives' in the parallel structure that denotes unrestricted continuity.

Still, on foregrounding the component of legislative matters through the use of linguistic parallelism, the Qur'ān also employs similarity in issues relating to divorce. In Qur'ān 2 verse 229, Allah says: 'Aṭṭalāqu marratāni fa'imsākum bima'rūfin 'awtasrīhun bi'ihsānin

Divorce is twice,

S P C A S P C A

(20) either you retain her on reasonable terms or (you) release her with kindness.

This parallel construction is cast to reform a grave social evil that was rampant in Arabia before the advent of Islam. Then, a lady could be divorced many times and she would be taken back. This severe social malady is here given a mental exposition by providing two options to the reader to ruminate over the contrasting meaning of *imsākun* 'retain' and *tasrīhun* 'release'. The aesthetic cum rhetorical appeal in the parallelism makes the verse a binding and convincing legislative matter that must be adhered to jettison the old and pre-Islamic wilful act of divorcing wives as many times as possible and taking them back.

Moving away from legislative concerns, Allāh employs complete antithetical parallelism in Qur'ān 12 verses 25-27 to exonerate Prophet Yūsuf from an allegation of sexual scandal levelled against him by Zulaykha, the wife of his master. By Allāh's command and might, a toddler mysteriously spoke in defence of Prophet Yūsuf in a highly complex grammatical parallel structure far beyond the intellectual grasp of the toddler to vehemently debunk the falsehood in Zulaykha's claim. He said:

*Inkāna qamīshuhu qudda min qubulin faṣaddaḡat wahuwa mina 'l-Kādhībīn*  
*Wain kāna qamīshuhu qudda min duburin fakadhabat wahuwa mina ṣ-Ṣādiqīn*

β

α

α

(21) If his shirt is rent **from the front**, then she **speaks the truth**, and he is one of the **liars**.

β

α

α

And if his shirt is rent **from behind**, then she **tells a lie**, and he is one of the **truthful**.



The parallel construction is balanced in terms of syntactic arrangement: each is a compound-complex sentence, containing a subordinate clause and two main clauses that complete the ideas in the subordinate clauses. But the antithetical parallel structure contains some key lexical items through which the toddler foregrounds the veracity of the scenario. For example, he contrasts the Adjuncts 'from the front' and 'from behind'; the Predicate and Complement elements 'speaks the truth' and 'tells a lie', and another Complements 'one of the liars' and 'one of the truthful' to establish the authenticity of the whole sex scandal. Here, the parallel example, given its forceful rhetorical appeal, crushes Zulaykha's tissues of lies and reveals the true account of the framed and malicious scandal, a scandal that would have consumed Prophet Yūsuf, punctured his claim to prophethood and thwarted his missionary activities. Thus, the parallel construction is employed to liberate the truth (Prophet Yūsuf) from the shackles of falsehood.

### Discussion

The foregoing has been an analysis of the use of parallelism in the Qur'ān. Twenty-one samples have been analysed, using SPCA syntactic pattern. Samples **3, 5, 6, 11, 12** and **20** are complex clauses (sentences) which are yoked together to produce parallelisms. All other parallel structures in the samples studied are two main clauses (compound sentences) combined to create parallelisms. These syntactic structures are knitted in parallel structures to express diverse topics and themes. For example, the present study is in tandem with Dror's (2017) finding that parallelism in the Qu'rān expresses Allāh's might and control, belief versus disbelief, uprightness versus evil, monotheism versus polytheism, God versus devil, etc.

Other themes or topics that are derived from the analysis of the parallel structures include reward versus punishment (samples 14 and 15), complex scientific knowledge or facts that express universal truth (samples 7 and 8), attributes, qualities and descriptions of Allāh (sample 9 and 10), legislative components of Islam (samples 17 18 and 20) and other sundry issues (sample 21). The finding revealed that these parallel structures that express scientific facts, universal truth and legislative components are cast in the simple present tense that conveys unrestricted time, an unbroken and timeless phenomenon.

In addition, samples 11, 12 and 13 corroborated Ojaide's (1996) and Alharbi's (2021) submission that parallel structures relate ideas together through the choice of the appropriate words to create textual cohesion. Cohesion enhances and elaborates ideas and propositions. Furthermore, concerning Philips's (2005) categorization of key linguistic concepts, analysis of antithetical parallelism in the Qur'ān shows that the legislative components analysed in samples 17 and 20 are regarded as specific rulings (khāss) meant for a particular situation or circumstance, while samples 18 and 19 are viewed as general rulings (āmm) that apply to all believers in all situations and circumstances.





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### Conclusion

Parallelism dominates one of the discourse strategies of the Qu'rān. All the types of parallelism identify in our literature review are present in the Qur'ān and antithetical parallelism constitutes one of the dominant types. Complete antithetical grammatical parallelism is one of the foregrounded style markers in the Qur'ān. Thus, parallelism is a foregrounded linguistic expression through which Allah communicates to humanity in general and to sincerely and devoted believers in particular. Parallelism, when employed, produces a connection of similarity and contrast. It is the contrast, however, that establishes the intended meaning/message of the speaker/writer; the rhetorical appeal that is meant to be decoded by the listener or reader. Such rhetorical appeal jolts his/her mind and draws his/her attention to the discourse strategy (parallelism) employed by the speaker/writer.



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