Journal of Interdisciplinary Qur'anic Studies

Contemporary Thoughts Press

Shahid Beheshti University

*Journal of Interdisciplinary Qur'anic Studies Vol.3, Issue 2, December 2024*

# *Critical Discourse Analysis of Surah al-Ghāshīyah: A Faircloughian Approach*

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*Article History: Received 29 April 2024; Accepted 12 August 2024*

ABSTRACT:

Original Paper

The Meccan Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* in the Qur'an, with its cohesive structure, constructs a multi-layered discourse through descriptions of the Day of Judgment, invitations to reflect on creation, and an emphasis on the Prophet's guiding role, promoting monotheistic faith and challenging the polytheistic hegemony of Mecca. This study examines how the surah represents theological concepts such as monotheism, resurrection, human responsibility, and social concepts including justice, faithful identity, and a critique of polytheism, while confronting the power structures of the Quraysh. Utilizing Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis framework, which views language as a social practice for reproducing or transforming power relations, the study is conducted at three levels: textual, discursive process, and social practice. Findings indicate that the surah employs contrastive vocabulary, concise grammatical structures, and rhetorical devices such as antithesis, repetition, and rhetorical questions to represent the dichotomy between faith and disbelief. These tools, by reinforcing the process of othering, promote faithful identity as a legitimate and ethical alternative, undermining polytheistic hegemony. The surah also proposes a social order based on justice and spiritual equality through intertextuality and the integration of warning, argumentative, and persuasive discourses. This analysis elucidates the role of religious texts in social transformations and contributes to a deeper understanding of the interplay between language and power in the historical context of Mecca.

KEYWORDS: Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Qur'anic discourse, Norman Fairclough, Othering, Hegemony, Rhetorical strategies, Intertextuality.

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http://dx.doi.org/10.37264/JIQS.V3I2.6

# *1. Introduction*

Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* constructs a multi-layered discourse through a cohesive structure by describing the states of two opposing groups on the Day of Judgment (Q. 88:1–16), inviting reflection on the signs of creation (Q. 88:17–20), and emphasizing the Prophet's (PBUH) role as a reminder (Q. 88:21–26), serving as a divine warning and a call to reconsider beliefs and behaviors (al-Ṭabrisī 1993, 10:723; al-Zarkashī 1997, 1:193). The name *al-Ghāshīyah*, meaning "the overwhelming" or referring to the Day of Judgment or fire, reflects its thematic focus (al-Ṭabrisī 1993, 10:725; Ibn ʿAṭīyyah 2001, 5:472). With its concise and eloquent style, the surah focuses on the concepts of monotheism, resurrection, and human responsibility, addressing Meccan polytheists with a warning and inviting tone to reconsider their beliefs.

In the Meccan context—a tribal society with power structures rooted in a commercial economy and polytheism—Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* promotes monotheistic faith as a religious text (Maqdisī 1962, 4:32). The polytheists, relying on tribal rituals, idol worship, and the economic benefits of the Kaaba, resisted the monotheistic message. The surah, with its rhetorical language and vivid imagery of paradise and hell, targets this resistance and reconstructs social and religious identity. Fairclough's (1992) critical discourse analysis, emphasizing the nexus of language, power, and ideology, elucidates how the surah shapes meanings and produces social impacts.

The primary research question explores how Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* represents theological (monotheism, resurrection, and human responsibility) and social (justice, faithful identity, and critique of polytheism) concepts, and its role in confronting the power structures of Meccan polytheists. The surah highlights the dichotomy between faith and disbelief through linguistic tools like antithesis and rhetorical questions, proposing a new social order based on justice and spiritual equality. Fairclough's (2015) framework, viewing language as a social practice and a tool for reproducing or transforming power relations, is employed to analyze this process.

The study aims to demonstrate how the surah reinforces faithful identity, critiques polytheistic beliefs, and promotes a new social order. Its significance lies in several aspects: First, religious texts are powerful discursive tools for political and cultural transformations (Said 1978). Second, Fairclough's framework enables a deep analysis of the language-power nexus. Third, this study enriches Qur'anic studies in discourse analysis and clarifies the role of religious texts in confronting power

structures. Thus, the research focuses on the question: How does Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, through its linguistic features, discursive processes, and interaction with Mecca's social structures, represent and promote monotheistic discourse while challenging polytheistic hegemony?

## *2. Literature Review*

Discourse analysis of Qur'anic verses and surahs using Fairclough's approach has gained attention in recent years. Many of these studies focus on specific verses or Qur'anic narratives, while fewer address a comprehensive analysis of an entire surah. For instance, the following articles focus on specific Qur'anic sections: Zolfaghari and Dastaranj (2019) on challenge verses; Salehi and Afshar (2019) on the story of Prophet Moses; Fattahizadeh and Mo'tamed Langaroudi (2021) on hypocrisy verses; Mirbazel and Arjomandi (2021) on Surah *al-Kahf*; Mahmoudi and Alipour (2024) on the story of Lot's people; Safayi Sangari and Karimi (2024) on Prophet Abraham's story; and Shirzadi et al. (2023) on descriptions of the Day of Judgment. Some studies, such as Molla Ebrahimi and Nouraeinia (2024) on the depiction of believers in Surah *al-Baqarah*, focus on linguistic and rhetorical aspects but give less attention to the socio-historical context of revelation. In contrast, this study comprehensively analyzes Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* and examines its interaction with the socio-historical context of early Islamic Mecca. Its focus on the social context and the surah's role in reconfiguring power relations offers an innovative approach in comparison with language-centric studies. Some articles, such as Asvadi and Sedarat (2022) on Surah *al-Ḍuḥā,* and Seyedi and Mahfouzi Mousavi (2021) on Surah *al-Qasas*, have conducted discourse analyses of complete surahs, but Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* has not yet been subjected to critical discourse analysis. This study, utilizing Fairclough's framework, fills this gap and elucidates the surah's role in confronting Mecca's power structures.

## *3. Theoretical Framework*

Critical discourse analysis, an interdisciplinary approach, examines language within its social context (Wodak & Meyer 2001). British linguist Norman Fairclough (2015) systematized this approach, viewing language as a social practice and a tool for reproducing or transforming power relations and ideologies. In Fairclough's (1992) view, discourse is a network of meanings that, within specific social and historical contexts, reproduces or challenges power relations. Drawing on the critical theories of Foucault and Gramsci, critical discourse analysis focuses on texts in which language

serves to maintain hegemony or foster resistance (Fairclough 2003). Fairclough provides a three-dimensional framework for discourse analysis, comprising three interconnected levels:

a) Textual Level: Examines linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, and rhetoric, demonstrating how linguistic choices highlight or marginalize meanings (Fairclough 1992).

b) Discursive Process Level: Addresses the production, distribution, and consumption of texts, including analysis of intertextuality, interdiscursivity, and implicit assumptions (Fairclough 2003).

c) Social Practice Level: Situates the text within its social and historical context, exploring its role in reproducing or transforming power structures and identities (Fairclough 1995).

Applying Fairclough's approach to religious texts, particularly Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, is significant for several reasons. This approach views religious texts like the Qur'an not only as theological tools but also as discourses that shape religious and social identities within specific social contexts (Wodak & Meyer 2001). Fairclough's emphasis on the language-power nexus makes it highly suitable for analyzing religious texts in historical contexts such as early Islamic Mecca. This approach not only facilitates a deeper understanding of how religious discourses function but also demonstrates how texts like the Qur'an, through language, contribute to ideological and social transformations.

## *4. Textual Analysis of Surah al-Ghāshīyah*

The textual level in Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis framework examines the linguistic and structural features of a text to reveal how lexical choices, grammatical structures, and rhetorical devices produce and represent specific meanings (Fairclough 1992). Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, with its 26 verses and concise structure characteristic of Meccan surahs, referred to as *ḥilyah al-Qur'ān* (al-Zamakhsharī 1986, 1:102), employs rich linguistic and rhetorical features to represent theological and social concepts in the context of early Islamic Mecca. This section, focusing on vocabulary, grammatical structures, rhetorical devices, and textual coherence, demonstrates how Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, as a discursive text, challenges Meccan polytheists and reinforces faithful identity. The analysis, grounded in Fairclough's three-dimensional framework (text, discursive practice, and social practice) and the interplay of language and power, draws on critical discourse analysis sources (Fairclough 2015) alongside traditional Islamic references to elucidate linguistic and ideological connections.

## *4.1. Vocabulary and Lexical Choices*

Lexical choices in Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* play a pivotal role in conveying meanings and creating emotional and intellectual impacts on the audience. Fairclough emphasizes that vocabulary not only conveys meanings but, through specific choices, highlights or marginalizes particular ideologies, contributing to the reproduction or disruption of power relations (Fairclough 2003). In Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, vocabulary is selected to create a stark contrast between the faithful and disbelievers, which, in the Meccan context—where polytheists resisted the monotheistic call—held strategic significance and facilitated "othering" (Van Dijk 2000) between disbelievers and believers, serving as a tool to challenge polytheistic hegemony.

The opening verses (Q. 88:2–7), describing the state of disbelievers on the Day of Judgment, employ vocabulary with negative and anguished connotations. The term *khāshiʿah* (humiliated) in verse 2, meaning humiliating submission, conveys a state of abasement and powerlessness; its lexical meaning, "looking down at the ground" (al-Farāhīdī 1988, 1:112), reflects this condition. In Arab culture, where tribal honor and pride were highly valued, this term served as a shocking warning for Meccan polytheists. From Fairclough's perspective (Fairclough 1992), *khāshiʿah*, by representing disbelievers as a humiliated and powerless group, undermines the polytheists' identity rooted in tribal authority and the Kaaba's status. This term contributes to the "othering" process by distinguishing "self" (believers) from "other" (disbelievers), marginalizing the polytheistic discourse that emphasized earthly honor and power. This lexical choice, at the level of reciprocal relations (Fairclough 2015), challenges the Quraysh's hegemony based on wealth and religious influence, presenting monotheistic discourse as a legitimate alternative.

The terms *ʿāmilatun nāṣibah* (wrought-up and weary) in verse 3 depict the futile efforts and endless suffering of disbelievers, contrasting with Meccan culture's veneration of material success and demonstrating the futility of disbelief (Sayyid Qutb 2004, 6:3896). Lexically, *naṣb* connotes hardship and difficulty (al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī 1991). Such lexical choices (Fairclough 2003), by representing disbelief as a failed path, question the legitimacy of the polytheists' materialistic discourse and present monotheistic discourse as superior.

The terms *nāran ḥāmīyah* (blazing fire) and *ʿaynin ānīyah* (boiling hot spring) in verses 4 and 5 create vivid and terrifying images of punishment, eliciting a profound emotional impact on Mecca's oral audience (Sayyid

Qutb 2004, 6:3896). The term *ḥāmīyah* means hot (al-Farāhīdī 1988, 3:314), and *ānīyah* signifies extreme heat (al-Farāhīdī 1988, 8:399). From a discursive perspective (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002), these terms, by instilling fear and anxiety, represent disbelievers as a group doomed to moral and social failure, reinforcing "othering" and undermining the polytheistic hegemony based on wealth and tribal power.

In contrast, the verses concerning believers (Q. 88:8–16) employ vocabulary with positive and soothing connotations. The term *nāʿimah* (joyful) in verse 8, meaning freshness and comfort, implicitly conveys a state of joy and serenity reflected in the face (Tabataba'i 2011, 20:274). From a discursive perspective (Fairclough 2003), *nāʿimah*, by representing believers as a group enjoying happiness and tranquility, positions faithful identity as superior and desirable compared to polytheistic identity, contributing to the process of "othering" through its contrast with *khāshiʿah*. The term *rāḍīyah* (pleased) in verse 9 reflects the believers' inner contentment with their deeds, presenting faith as a path to happiness in contrast to the disbelievers' suffering (Tabataba'i 2011, 20:274). By emphasizing spiritual satisfaction, this term prioritizes spiritual and ethical values over the polytheists' materialism, thereby marginalizing the Quraysh's wealth- and power-based hegemony (Van Dijk 2000).

Descriptions of paradise with phrases like *jannatun ʿālīyah* (garden on high), *ʿaynun jārīyah* (bubbling spring), and *sururun marfūʿah* (raised couches) in verses 10–16 create images of abundance and tranquility (Fadlallah 1998, 24:223), which held particular appeal in Meccan culture that valued material prosperity. From a discursive perspective (Fairclough 2015), such terms, by representing divine rewards, reinforce the legitimacy of monotheistic discourse, promote faithful identity as a path to happiness and legitimacy through the distinction between "self" (believers) and "other" (disbelievers), and render the choice between faith and disbelief tangible for the audience both visually and emotionally.

## *4.2. Grammatical Structures*

The grammatical structures of Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* contribute to its conciseness and coherence, organizing meanings in a way that enhances its discursive impact. Fairclough argues that grammatical structures, such as word order and sentence types, play a role in representing power relations and meanings (Fairclough 1992). Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* employs short, concise declarative sentences, suitable for the Meccan oral audience accustomed to brevity and impact. From Fairclough's perspective, these structures, by creating a sense of certainty and authority (high modality),

reinforce the monotheistic discourse as legitimate and divine (Fairclough 2003).

For instance, verses 2–7 and 8–16 utilize parallel structures: *Wujūhun yawmaʾidhin khāshiʿah* (Some faces, that Day, will be humiliated) versus *Wujūhun yawmaʾidhin nāʿimah* (Faces that Day will be joyful). This parallelism structurally highlights the contrast between the two groups, enabling direct comparison for the audience. The use of nominal sentences, such as *Wujūhun yawmaʾidhin khāshiʿah* and *lisaʿyihā rāḍīyah* (Pleased with their striving), instead of verbal sentences, imparts a sense of stability and certainty to the descriptions. From Fairclough's (2015) perspective, nominal sentences, by conveying a sense of permanence and immutability, establish disbelievers as a group doomed to humiliation and believers as a group enjoying felicity.

This syntactic choice, by representing disbelief as a fixed and inevitable state, undermines polytheistic hegemony and presents faith as a legitimate and stable path. Additionally, verses 17–20 employ interrogative structures (*afalā yanẓurūna ilā*… – Do they not look at…), shifting from a declarative to an interrogative tone, specifically using rhetorical negation (*istifhām inkārī*) (Ibn ʿĀshūr 1999, 30:269), directly engaging the audience in the discourse. These structures, by inviting rational reflection and fostering a sense of invitation rather than coercion (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002), promote monotheistic discourse as a logical and rational perspective in opposition to polytheistic beliefs.

## *4.3. Rhetorical Devices*

The rhetorical devices in Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, such as antithesis, repetition, rhetorical questions, and imagery, play a key role in enhancing its discursive impact. Fairclough (2003) emphasizes that these devices, by creating meanings and expressing certainty or probability, target the audience's emotions and perceptions, thereby reproducing or transforming power relations.

The most prominent rhetorical device in the surah is the antithesis between the depiction of disbelievers (Q. 88:2–7) and believers (Q. 88:8–16), which, through parallel structures and contrasting vocabulary, portrays two distinct paths: suffering and punishment for disbelievers versus felicity and tranquility for believers. From Fairclough's perspective (1992), this antithesis, by creating meaning through the contrast between faith and disbelief, represents monotheistic discourse as a legitimate and ethical path, marginalizing polytheistic discourse. Thus, antithesis, by reinforcing

othering, highlights faithful identity against polytheistic identity and undermines the power relations of polytheism.

Another rhetorical device is repetition, evident in verses 17–20 with the structure *afalā yanẓurūna ilā*… (Do they not look at…) and the repeated use of *kayfa* (how) in reference to the camel, sky, mountains, and earth. Repetition is a method of influencing the audience (Khoei 2006). From a discursive perspective (Fairclough 2015), repetition, as a tool for constructing meaning, reinforces the monotheistic argument by highlighting signs of creation and, by inviting rational reflection, challenges polytheistic beliefs that attributed creation to multiple deities. Thus, through coherence and emphasis, it promotes monotheistic discourse as a logical and rational perspective. In the oral culture of the Hijaz, where repetition was a common rhetorical device in poetry and oratory (Sayyid Murtaḍā 1994), this technique had a profound impact.

The first verse and verses 17–20 employ rhetorical questions, prompting the audience to reflect and respond. The opening question, with its distinctive tone, connects the audience to the theme of the Day of Judgment, while the questions in verses 17–20, by inviting contemplation of creation, provide a rational argument. From a discursive perspective (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002), rhetorical questions, by creating a sense of certainty and inviting reflection, encourage the audience to embrace monotheistic discourse and challenge polytheistic beliefs rooted in the denial of resurrection and multiple deities, presenting monotheistic discourse as a rational and legitimate perspective. Such rhetorical questions, which are not intended literally, aim to convey secondary meanings like negation or reproach in the Qur'an (Tantawi 1997, 1:88).

Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* also employs vivid imagery to describe the Day of Judgment and creation (Sayyid Qutb 2004, 6:3897). Descriptions like *nāran ḥāmīyah* (blazing fire) and *ʿaynin ānīyah* (boiling hot spring) for disbelievers and jannatun *ʿālīyah* (garden on high) and *ʿaynun jārīyah* (bubbling spring) for believers create tangible images that had emotional and visual impact for the Meccan audience accustomed to poetic description. These images, by creating meaning (Fairclough 1992), transform abstract concepts like resurrection into tangible realities and, by evoking an emotional contrast between punishment and reward, represent faith as a path to felicity and disbelief as a path to suffering. This approach also weakens polytheistic hegemony and strengthens faithful identity by influencing the audience's emotions.

## *4.4. Textual Coherence and Structure*

The coherence of Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* is achieved through its tripartite division: description of the Day of Judgment (Q. 88:1–16), signs of creation (Q. 88:17–20), and the Prophet's role (Q. 88:21–26). Fairclough (1995) defines discursive order as an arrangement of meanings and power relations that, through textual structures, reproduce or transform social and ideological relations. In Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, the discursive order is not limited to internal textual coherence (e.g., connections through pronouns and linguistic connectors) but constitutes a strategic arrangement of meanings that positions monotheistic discourse against polytheistic discourse.

The tripartite division—moving from the description of the Day of Judgment (emotional warning), to signs of creation (rational argument), and then to the Prophet's role and divine authority (establishing monotheistic authority)—creates a discursive order that undermines polytheistic hegemony and represents monotheistic discourse as legitimate and dominant (Fairclough 2015). This structure, with its logical and emotional progression, guides the Meccan audience from fear and reflection to the acceptance of guidance (Wodak & Meyer 2001). According to some exegetes, Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* was revealed in its entirety, and its thematic unity supports this view (Darwaza 2000, 5:45). However, its coherence can also be demonstrated across its diverse sections.

The first section, with a warning tone, focuses the audience on the Day of Judgment, highlighting the importance of choosing faith through contrast. The second section, by inviting reflection on creation, provides a monotheistic argument that challenges polytheistic beliefs. The third section, emphasizing the Prophet's role as a reminder and as a bearer of divine authority, brings the discourse to an authoritative conclusion. The surah's discursive order, by representing power relations (divine authority versus Quraysh's tribal power), establishes monotheistic discourse as a legitimate and superior alternative, encouraging the audience to embrace monotheistic ideology through semantic coherence (Fairclough 1992).

Coherence is further reinforced through pronouns and linguistic connectors. The pronoun *yawmaʾidhin* (that Day) in verses 2 and 8 creates a temporal link between descriptions of the Day of Judgment. Logical connectors like *fa* in verse 21 (*fadhakkir* – Therefore, do thou remind) and *illā* in verse 23 maintain the text's argumentative flow. These linguistic elements, within the framework of discursive order (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002), ensure textual coherence and, by creating semantic connections

between the Day of Judgment, creation, and divine authority, position monotheistic discourse as cohesive and authoritative against the fragmented and irrational polytheistic discourse. This coherence transforms the surah into a text that is both emotional (through imagery of the Day of Judgment) and rational (through signs of creation), rendering it impactful for the Meccan audience that valued coherence in oral orations.

## *4.5. Textual Context Analysis*

The textual context of Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, particularly in comparison with other Meccan surahs, reflects a specific discursive strategy. Meccan surahs typically focus on conciseness, a warning tone, and calls to monotheism (al-Suyūṭī 2015, 1:69). Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, by combining descriptions of the Day of Judgment, signs of creation, and the Prophet's role, presents these features in a focused manner that both counters polytheistic resistance and introduces faith as a meaningful alternative.

From a discursive perspective (Fairclough 2003), this textual context, with its meaning-making function, integrates the surah into the broader Qur'anic discourse aimed at transforming Meccan society's beliefs and challenging polytheistic hegemony through the interplay of language and power.

## *4.6. Conclusion of Textual Level Analysis*

The textual level analysis demonstrates that Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, through contrastive vocabulary, concise and parallel grammatical structures, rhetorical devices such as antithesis, repetition, rhetorical questions, and imagery, and cohesive textual structure, represents theological and social concepts in a manner that serves both as a warning to Meccan polytheists and an invitation to faith.

The quality of lexical choices in Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, from the perspective of Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, is highly effective and strategic. Terms like *khāshiʿah*, *nāʿimah*, *nāran ḥāmīyah*, and *jannatun ʿālīyah* are carefully selected to create semantic and emotional contrasts, reinforcing the process of "othering." These terms, by representing disbelievers as a debased group and believers as enjoying felicity, promote faithful identity as a legitimate and appealing alternative while effectively undermining polytheistic hegemony rooted in tribal honor and wealth.

The appeal of these lexical choices, given the oral culture and materialistic values of Mecca, is emotionally and visually impactful, making

abstract concepts like resurrection tangible through vivid imagery. The meaning-making function of these lexical choices establishes monotheistic discourse as dominant and rational, marginalizing polytheistic discourse and contributing to the transformation of power relations in Meccan society (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). The surah's textual structure, with its discursive order, reconfigures power relations through the logical and emotional progression of its verses, positioning divine authority against the Quraysh's tribal power and establishing monotheistic discourse as a legitimate alternative (Wodak & Meyer 2001). These features, by creating a distinction between "self" (believers) and "other" (disbelievers) through "othering," meaning-making functions, and modality, reinforce faithful identity and challenge the polytheistic hegemony rooted in tribal power and wealth. Thus, the surah functions as a discursive tool that marginalizes polytheistic beliefs and promotes faith as a path to felicity and rationality.

## *5. Discursive Process Level Analysis*

The discursive process level in Fairclough's critical discourse analysis framework examines the processes of text production, distribution, and consumption, focusing on concepts such as intertextuality, interdiscursivity, and implicit assumptions (Fairclough 2003). This level reveals how a text interacts with other discourses and how meanings are shaped through interaction with social and historical contexts, and interpreted by specific audiences. Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, revealed in the early years of the Prophet's mission within the oral and polytheistic context of Mecca, produces and conveys its theological and social meanings through interaction with pre-existing discourses, implicit assumptions, and discursive processes. This analysis, focusing on these elements, explores the surah's role in shaping monotheistic ideology and challenging polytheistic beliefs.

### *5.1. Intertextuality*

Intertextuality refers to a text's connection with prior or contemporary texts or discourses, showing how a new text borrows from or redefines existing discourses (Fairclough 1992). Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, in the Meccan context—a society with diverse cultural and religious interactions—engages with prior religious discourses (particularly those of the Abrahamic traditions) and Arab oral and cultural discourses. This intertextuality enables the surah to introduce new monotheistic concepts while connecting with the audience's existing beliefs and knowledge, thereby reducing resistance.

The depiction of the punishment of disbelievers with *nāran ḥāmīyah*

(blazing fire) and the reward of believers with *jannatun ʿālīyah* pertains to descriptions of the Day of Judgment. A key aspect of intertextuality in Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* is its connection with Abrahamic religious discourses concerning the Day of Judgment and divine accountability. While the Pentateuch lacks references to the afterlife, the concept of the afterlife in the Talmud became a central idea following the Babylonian captivity (Mashkour 1989). However, the Gospels address this topic more explicitly (John 5:28). Thus, the theme of the Day of Judgment is a shared element among Abrahamic religions, albeit to varying degrees. The opening verses (Q. 88:2–16), describing the states of disbelievers and believers on the Day of Judgment, share thematic connections with Jewish and Christian narratives.

Additionally, verses 17–20, which invite reflection on the signs of creation (camel, sky, mountains, earth), engage with Arab oral and poetic traditions. In pre-Islamic culture, poets often used nature as a subject for reflection and praise, with descriptions of animals and natural phenomena common in their poetry (Ayati 1992). Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, by referencing the camel—a symbol of survival and economic importance for Arabs—and other elements of creation, employs this tradition while transforming it from a discourse of nature worship to a monotheistic argument. This intertextuality presents monotheistic discourse in a familiar format for the Meccan audience, thereby reducing their resistance.

## *5.2. Interdiscursivity*

Interdiscursivity refers to the combination and interaction of various discourses within a single text, demonstrating how a text employs different types of discourse (such as warning, argumentative, or persuasive discourses) to achieve its objectives (Fairclough 2003). Surah *al- Ghāshīyah* employs a complex blend of warning, argumentative, and persuasive discourses, each serving the theological and social purposes of the surah. This combination transforms the surah into a multifaceted text that operates both emotionally (to influence the audience's feelings) and rationally (to persuade intellectually).

The opening verses (Q. 88:1–7) establish a "warning discourse" by describing the punishment of disbelievers on the Day of Judgment. The first verse, "*Hal atāka ḥadīthu al-Ghāshīyah?*" (Has the news of the Overwhelming Event reached you?), directs the audience to a profound and terrifying subject, while the subsequent verses, with expressions such as *khāshiʿah* (humiliated), *nāran ḥāmīyah* (blazing fire), and *ḍarīʿ* (bitter food), evoke fear and anxiety. This alarming discourse, in the context of

Mecca—where polytheists denied the afterlife—served as a warning to reconsider their beliefs.

Verses 17–20 employ an "argumentative discourse" by inviting reflection on the signs of creation. The interrogative structure "Do they not look at…" and the emphasis on *kayf* (how) indicate an invitation to contemplation and reasoning, which stood in contrast to the polytheists' belief in associating partners with God. This discourse, by presenting tangible signs of creation, introduced monotheism as a logical and rational perspective, urging the audience to reconsider polytheism.

Verses 8–16 and 21–26 present a "persuasive discourse." The depiction of the believers' reward with imagery such as *jannatun ʿālīyah* (Garden on high), *ʿaynun jārīyah* (bubbling spring) and the emphasis on divine satisfaction with *lisaʿyihā rāḍīyah* (Pleased with their striving) encourages faith. The concluding verses, emphasizing the Prophet's role as a reminder with "You are only a reminder" and divine authority with "To Us is their return," create an authoritative discourse that promotes faith as a moral choice while marginalizing the earthly power of polytheists. This discursive combination transforms the surah into a tool that targets both the audience's emotions and intellect.

## *5.3. Implicit Assumptions*

Implicit assumptions are beliefs or knowledge that a text expects its audience to accept or at least consider plausible (Fairclough 1995). Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* introduces assumptions that align with the cultural and religious context of Mecca but redirects them toward a monotheistic discourse. These assumptions enable the surah to connect with its polytheistic audience while challenging their beliefs.

Firstly, the surah assumes that the audience is familiar with the concept of the Day of Judgment and divine accountability, or at least accepts it as a plausible possibility. The first verse, "Has the news of the Overwhelming Event reached you?"—with a tone that assumes the audience is prepared to hear momentous news—reinforces this belief. Although most polytheists did not believe in the afterlife, some were familiar with the concept due to their beliefs (Farrukh 1984). Thus, this assumption allowed the surah to build its discourse on a shared foundation.

Secondly, verses 17–20 assume that the audience is capable of reflecting on nature and interpreting it as evidence of a single Creator. References to camels, the sky, mountains, and the earth, which were tangible and familiar to Meccan Arabs (Sayyid Qutb 2004, 6: 3898), reinforce this assumption.

This assumption counters polytheistic beliefs that attributed creation to multiple deities, presenting a monotheistic argument.

Finally, the concluding verses (Q. 88:21–26) assume that the audience is already familiar with the Prophet's role through the Qur'an, even if they do not wholeheartedly believe in it. The emphasis on "You are only a reminder" and "You are not a controller over them" reflects an effort to gain the audience's trust.

## *5.4. Processes of Production and Consumption*

The processes of production and consumption of a text refer to how it is created and received within its social context. Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, in the oral context of Mecca, was delivered by the Prophet (PBUH) gradually, through public sermons or private gatherings. This mode of production, consistent with Mecca's oral culture, allowed the surah to engage directly with its audience. The consumption of the surah occurred on two levels: first, by polytheists who often responded with resistance or, on rare occasions, with reflection (Q. 21:2–3); and second, by believers who received it as a source of strengthened faith and perseverance (Q. 6:92). These processes transformed the surah into a dynamic part of Mecca's social dialogue.

## *5.5. Summary of the Discursive Process Level*

Analysis at the discursive process level reveals that Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, through intertextuality with the discourses of Abrahamic religions and pre-Islamic Arab oral traditions, and interdiscursivity with a combination of warning, argumentative, and persuasive discourses, along with implicit assumptions about the audience's beliefs, creates a multifaceted discourse. These processes enabled the surah, in the Meccan context, to engage with existing beliefs, challenge polytheistic resistance, and promote monotheistic ideology as a meaningful alternative.

# *6. Analysis of the Social Practice Level*

The social practice level in Fairclough's critical discourse analysis framework examines the role of a text within its social, historical, and cultural context, illustrating how texts contribute to reproducing, maintaining, or transforming power structures, identities, and social orders (Fairclough 1995). Revealed in the middle years of the Meccan period, Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, as a social practice, challenged polytheistic hegemony,

reinforced the nascent faith-based identity, and proposed a new social order based on monotheism and divine justice. This analysis, focusing on Mecca's social context, explores the surah's discursive role in confronting power structures and its impact on social transformations.

## *6.1. Social and Historical Context of Mecca*

Mecca in early Islam was a tribal city with a commercial economy dominated by the Quraysh. As custodians of the Kaaba and intermediaries of trade, the Quraysh held social and religious authority, reinforcing a polytheistic discourse and resisting the monotheistic call (Hodgson 1974). Within Fairclough's critical discourse analysis framework, the social practice level examines how a text interacts with, represents, or restructures social structures (Fairclough 1992). Through its vocabulary, grammatical structures, and rhetorical devices, Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* challenges the Quraysh's dominance and tribal identity, promoting a distinct faith-based identity. This section, by distinguishing historical data from discursive analysis, examines the surah's interaction with Mecca's social structures and analyzes the effectiveness of its warning, argumentative, and persuasive methods.

## *6.2. Reinforcing Faith-Based Identity*

Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, through vocabulary and imagery such as *nāʿimah* (joyful), *rāḍīyah* (pleased), and *jannatun ʿālīyah* (elevated Garden), represents a collective faith-based identity. According to discourse identity theory, identities are shaped through discourses that define social differences through processes of othering (Laclau & Mouffe 1985). The terms *nāʿimah* (joyful) and *rāḍīyah* (pleased) portray believers as a group enjoying spiritual felicity (Tabataba'i 2011, 20:274), standing in contrast to the Quraysh's tribal identity based on lineage and wealth (Hodgson 1974). These terms, contrasted with *khāshiʿah* (humiliated), reinforce the process of othering and establish the faith-based identity as a distinct and collective identity (Van Dijk 2000). For instance, the emphasis on *rāḍīyah* (pleased) highlights spiritual values in contrast to the Quraysh's materialism, contributing to the formation of a collective identity based on faith and spiritual equality (Berkey 2003). This representation, by promoting values such as justice and fairness, challenges Mecca's class-based structure that privileged Quraysh elites (Donner 2010). By emphasizing individual responsibility, Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* promotes ethical values in opposition to Quraysh hegemony (Cook 2000). The contrast between these values and the

Quraysh's class privileges (Fadlallah 1998, 24:223) strengthens the faith-based identity as an alternative to tribal identity, advocating values such as fairness and justice over Mecca's unequal structures.

## *6.3. Challenging Polytheistic Hegemony*

Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, through rhetorical devices, restructures the Quraysh's hegemony, which was based on tribal authority, trade, and idol worship (al-Kalbī 2000; al-Yaʿqūbī 2008, 1:349). Fairclough (1992) emphasizes that discursive texts transform existing hegemonies by representing power relations. In the verse, "On that Day, faces will be humbled" (Q. 88:2), the use of a nominal sentence and the omission of God as the agent of punishment convey a sense of certainty and inevitability, emphasizing divine authority over the Quraysh's tribal power. This rhetorical device portrays disbelievers as a passive group, undermining the Quraysh's religious influence tied to their custodianship of the Kaaba (Crone 1987).

Additionally, the rhetorical questions in verses 17–20, inviting reflection on creation, challenge the legitimacy of polytheistic beliefs that attributed the world to multiple deities (Sayyid Qutb 2004, 6:3897). These questions, with their meaning-making function, position the monotheistic discourse as a rational perspective in contrast to polytheistic discourse (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002), inviting the audience to reconsider polytheism and weakening the Quraysh's religious authority tied to their custodianship of the Kaaba (Peters 1994). Thus, the surah's rhetorical devices, by undermining the Quraysh's authority, represent the monotheistic discourse as a rational and ethical alternative.

## *6.4. A New Social Order*

Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* proposes a social order based on monotheism and justice, contrasting with Mecca's tribal and class-based structure. Verses 21–26, "So remind, you are only a reminder… Indeed, to Us is their account," emphasize the Prophet's guiding role and divine authority, replacing tribal loyalty with individual accountability to God. These verses, by representing divine authority as the ultimate reference, restructure Mecca's social order rooted in lineage and wealth (Lapidus 1988).

The surah promotes ethical values, enjoining good and forbidding evil in opposition to polytheism (Cook 2000). For example, the depiction of believers' rewards in verses 8–16 with expressions such as *jannatun ʿālīyah* and *ʿaynun jārīyah* promotes values of spiritual equality and universal

felicity, contrasting with Mecca's social inequalities, such as the privileges of Quraysh elites (Crone 1987). Consequently, this order, emphasizing divine justice and individual accountability, is presented as an alternative to tribal-based social structures (Berkey 2003), proposing a social order that restructures Mecca's tribal inequalities through divine justice and spiritual equality.

## *6.5. Summary of the Social Practice Level Analysis*

Surah *al-Ghāshīyah* employs warning, argumentative, and persuasive methods to restructure Mecca's social structures and promote a faith-based identity. These methods, by engaging with power relations and social identities, are effective in contexts with similar structures:

a) Warning Method: Verses 1–7, with descriptions of disbelievers' punishment using terms like *nāran ḥāmīyah* (Blazing Fire), *ʿaynin ānīyah* (boiling spring), and *khāshiʿah* (humiliated), convey a sense of degradation and the consequences of disbelief. This method, by portraying disbelievers as a passive group subject to divine authority, undermines the Quraysh's hegemony based on tribal pride.

b) Argumentative Method: Verses 17–20, with rhetorical questions such as "Do they not look at the camels, how they are created?" invite reflection on the signs of creation. These questions, with their meaning-making function, challenge polytheistic beliefs that attribute creation to multiple deities, establishing the monotheistic discourse as a rational perspective.

c) Persuasive Method: Verses 8–16, with descriptions of believers' rewards using terms like *jannatun ʿālīyah*, *nāʿimah*, and *rāḍīyah*, portray faith as a path to felicity. This method, by creating a faith-based discursive identity, positions values of equality and justice against the Quraysh's materialism and social inequality, reinforcing the believers' collective identity.

Together, these methods, by representing power relations and social identities, establish the monotheistic discourse as an alternative to Mecca's tribal and polytheistic system. Their combination—emphasizing divine authority, justice, and spiritual equality—proposes a social order that restructures hierarchical structures and promotes a collective and distinct faith-based identity.

## *7. Conclusion*

This study demonstrates that Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, through its linguistic and rhetorical features, represents and promotes the monotheistic discourse as a legitimate and ethical alternative to Mecca's polytheistic system. At the textual level, contrastive vocabulary, parallel structures, and rhetorical questions highlight the dichotomy between faith and disbelief, making abstract concepts like the afterlife tangible through vivid imagery of paradise and hell. These tools, by reinforcing the process of othering, establish the faith-based identity as a superior and collective identity, undermining the Quraysh's hegemony based on tribal pride and wealth. At the discursive process level, the surah—through intertextuality with Abrahamic religious discourses and pre-Islamic Arab oral traditions, and through a combination of warning, argumentative, and persuasive discourses—engages with the beliefs of the Meccan audience, inviting them to reconsider polytheism. At the social practice level, the surah, by proposing a social order based on monotheism, justice, and spiritual equality, restructures Mecca's tribal and class-based systems. Overall, Surah *al-Ghāshīyah*, through its language and rhetoric, promotes monotheistic discourse and challenges polytheistic hegemony. This study reveals that religious texts—beyond their theological function—serve as discursive tools for social transformation, highlighting the profound connection between language and power in historical contexts.

## *Acknowledgements*

The author sincerely thanks the refereeing team for their insightful and constructive guidance, which greatly enhanced the quality of this work. The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest related to this study, and that no financial support was received.

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