

ISTI'ARAH IN SURAH AL-BAQARAH: A BALĀGHAH ANALYSIS OF QUR'ANIC METAPHORS IN CONSTRUCTING MORAL AND SPIRITUAL DISCOURSES

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Abstract:

This study aims to identify and analyze the types of *isti'ārah* (metaphor) in Surah Al-Baqarah verses 1–266 and to explore the embedded moral and spiritual values. *Isti'ārah*, as a form of rhetorical metaphor in Arabic rhetoric (balāghah), serves not only as an aesthetic element but also as a tool for delivering profound ethical and faith-based messages in the Qur'an. Using a qualitative content analysis method, this study examines various classifications of *isti'ārah* based on their contextual clues (*qarīnah*), linguistic forms (primary and derivative), structural completeness (explicit, implicit, and absolute metaphors), and representative similes (*tamtsiliyyah*). The findings show that the use of *isti'ārah* in Surah Al-Baqarah strengthens Qur'anic messages by evoking emotional and spiritual responses. Moral messages include warnings against betrayal and injustice (e.g., QS 2:9, 2:27), while spiritual insights are conveyed through metaphors of darkness and light or symbolic deafness and blindness (e.g., QS 2:18, 2:257). These rhetorical tools not only beautify the text but also deepen reflection and understanding of divine guidance.

Keywords: *isti'ārah*, *qur'anic rhetoric*, *morality*, *spirituality*, *metaphor*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis jenis-jenis *isti'ārah* (metafora) dalam Surah Al-Baqarah ayat 1–266 serta mengeksplorasi nilai-nilai moral dan spiritual yang terkandung di dalamnya. *Isti'ārah* sebagai bentuk metafora retoris dalam ilmu balāghah Arab tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai unsur estetis, tetapi juga sebagai sarana penyampaian pesan etis dan keimanan yang mendalam dalam Al-Qur'an. Dengan menggunakan metode analisis isi kualitatif, penelitian ini menelaah berbagai klasifikasi *isti'ārah* berdasarkan petunjuk kontekstualnya (*qarīnah*), bentuk kebahasaannya (dasar dan turunan), kelengkapan strukturnya (metafora eksplisit, implisit, dan absolut), serta perumpamaan representatifnya (*tamtsiliyyah*). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan *isti'ārah* dalam Surah Al-Baqarah memperkuat pesan-pesan Al-Qur'an dengan membangkitkan respons emosional dan spiritual. Pesan moral mencakup peringatan terhadap pengkhianatan dan ketidakadilan (misalnya QS 2:9, 2:27), sedangkan wawasan spiritual disampaikan melalui metafora kegelapan dan cahaya atau simbolik ketulian dan kebutaan (misalnya QS 2:18, 2:257). Alat retoris ini tidak hanya memperindah teks, tetapi juga memperdalam refleksi dan pemahaman terhadap petunjuk ilahi.

Kata Kunci: *isti'ārah*, retorika al-qur'an, moralitas, spiritualitas, metafora

INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an is the divine revelation of Allah SWT, revealed to the Prophet Muhammad SAW in Arabic, serving as a universal guide for humanity across all ages. Although it was conveyed in Arabic, numerous linguistic expressions within the Qur'an possess distinctive features that are not entirely identical to conventional Arabic used in daily communication (Sya'bani, n.d.)

Since its revelation in the Arabian Peninsula in the 6th century CE, the Qur'an has stood as an extraordinary masterpiece of Arabic literature. During the Prophet Muhammad's lifetime, differences in understanding its meanings were minimal, as the Companions could directly consult him for clarification of particular verses. However, after his passing, interpretative differences began to emerge (Arip, 2019)

Over time, Qur'anic interpretation has continued to evolve. The various *tafsir* works produced reflect the diverse intellectual backgrounds of the exegetes (*mufassirūn*) and the socio-cultural contexts surrounding them, both of which influence the variation in interpreting the Qur'anic text. These differences are not merely the result of personal perspectives but are also shaped by the inherent linguistic complexity of the Qur'an itself. The literary beauty and depth of the Qur'an allow multiple layers of interpretation to emerge from a single verse.

For this reason, the science of *balāghah* (Arabic rhetoric) is essential in understanding the Qur'an, especially in interpreting the messages conveyed through metaphorical language. Without a profound understanding of *balāghah*, one may misinterpret verses that contain subtle and implicit moral and spiritual messages. *Balāghah* provides analytical tools to distinguish between literal (*haqīqī*) and figurative (*majāzī*) meanings and to uncover the hidden messages Allah SWT communicates through the beauty of His language. Therefore, rhetorical analysis not only enriches one's comprehension of the Qur'anic message but also safeguards interpretation from distortions that could compromise the integrity of Islamic faith and ethics.

The language of the Qur'an is imbued with rhetorical beauty and profound meaning. One of its most remarkable rhetorical devices is *isti'ārah* (metaphor), a figurative expression that clarifies meaning through analogy. *Isti'ārah* in the Qur'an is not merely a stylistic ornament but a persuasive, affective, and didactic tool with immense expressive power.

In the tradition of *balāghah*, *isti'ārah* is categorized under *majāz bayānī* and is regarded as the strongest form of analogy because it omits one of the elements of comparison (*tashbih*), requiring deeper comprehension from the reader. Within this context, *isti'ārah* plays a crucial role in elucidating the principles of monotheism (*tawhīd*), warning against moral corruption, and delivering divine guidance in an eloquent yet evocative manner (Komarudin, 2017).

Surah al-Baqarah, the longest chapter of the Qur'an, contains numerous instances of *isti'ārah* across themes such as faith, hypocrisy, guidance, and falsehood. Hence, this article seeks to examine the forms of *isti'ārah* in Surah al-Baqarah and their rhetorical and spiritual functions.

The use of language in the Qur'an is not merely a medium of conveying information but also a means of spiritual education and moral formation. Among its rhetorical features, *isti'ārah* plays a vital role in enlivening meanings, constructing imagery, and expressing moral and spiritual messages in profound and symbolic

ways. Qur'anic metaphors transform abstract concepts into vivid imagery that engages the reader's intellect, emotion, and spirit simultaneously.

Studies on *isti'ārah* in Surah al-Baqarah have become a central focus in Qur'anic rhetoric research, systematically revealing the significant role of metaphorical expression in enriching moral and spiritual understanding. Through five selected studies, one can observe the development of research that is not only linguistically rigorous but also interpretively and rhetorically profound.

Research conducted by (Murdiono et al., 2022) marks an early stage with a comprehensive *balāghah* analysis. They classified Qur'anic verses containing *isti'ārah* into subcategories such as *taṣrīhiyyah*, *makniyyah*, and *thaba'iyyah*. Their findings highlight that *isti'ārah* not only beautifies the Qur'anic text but also serves as a key to uncovering hidden meanings, deepening exegesis, and enriching expressions that move readers toward contemplation.

Continuing this tradition, (Komarudin, 2017) focused on the rhetorical and stylistic effects of *isti'ārah*, particularly examining how metaphors in certain verses, such as QS 2:7 ("sealing of the hearts"), build spiritual intensity and emotional resonance in readers. This study emphasizes that *isti'ārah* is not a mere linguistic embellishment but an effective Qur'anic communicative tool.

A unique qualitative approach is found in a thesis from UIN Suska Riau (2023), which specifically examined verse 187 of Surah al-Baqarah from a *lughawī tafsīr* (linguistic exegesis) perspective. By comparing the interpretations of Ibn Kathīr and Abū Ḥayyān, the study demonstrates how a single metaphorical expression can reveal multiple interpretive layers, showcasing the linguistic miracle of the Qur'an in greater depth and context.

Meanwhile, a broader study by Ahmad Fasya (2016) catalogued figurative language (*majāz*) in al-Baqarah, offering valuable insight into the frequency and aesthetic function of *isti'ārah*. The research affirmed that Qur'anic metaphors not only clarify complex concepts but also reinforce moral and spiritual messages, making them more impactful and memorable for readers.

Finally, a 2023 study published in the Journal of UIN SGD Bandung proposed a contemporary interpretative approach, viewing *isti'ārah* as an essential tool for unveiling esoteric meanings and linguistic ambiguities in Surah al-Baqarah. The study emphasized that the interpretive flexibility of *isti'ārah* opens reflective space and fosters spiritual awareness among modern readers.

From these studies, it can be concluded that *isti'ārah* in Surah al-Baqarah serves as a linguistically and theologically rich rhetorical medium that bridges the dimensions of language, exegesis, and rhetoric to reinforce moral and spiritual messages. Each study unveils new dimensions of how Qur'anic metaphors function as living and eloquent vehicles of divine communication.

Surah al-Baqarah—one of the longest chapters of the Qur'an, addressing issues of creed, social relations, law, and morality—contains a wide range of *isti'ārah* expressions that warrant analysis. Various metaphors illustrate the states of the heart, faith, hypocrisy, guidance, misguidance, and human attitudes toward revelation. This phenomenon demonstrates that *isti'ārah* is not merely rhetorical ornamentation but carries significant educational and reflective functions.

The background problem of this study lies in the limited number of in-depth analyses focusing specifically on the forms and functions of *isti'ārah* within a single surah, particularly Surah al-Baqarah. Therefore, this study aims to contribute scholarly insight by mapping the forms of *isti'ārah* in the surah, analyzing their types

and functions in conveying moral and spiritual messages, and illustrating how Qur'anic rhetoric profoundly touches the human soul.

To address these objectives, this research analyzes verses in Surah al-Baqarah containing *isti'ārah*, identifies their types based on *balāghah* classification (*taṣrīhiyyah*, *makniyyah*, *tamthīliyyah*), and explains the rhetorical meanings and functions behind their usage. The study employs a qualitative descriptive approach with stylistic (*balāghah*) analysis methods.

It is hoped that this research will provide a deeper understanding of the meanings and messages of the Qur'an through a linguistic lens. Its benefits extend not only to scholars of *balāghah* and *tafsīr* but also to educators, writers, and preachers (*da'īs*) who seek to employ Qur'anic language more effectively in conveying religious messages. Moreover, this study opens pathways for further research focusing on *balāghah* analysis in other surahs or specific metaphorical themes in the Qur'an.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method with a *balāghah* stylistic approach, which is a linguistic approach that examines the beauty and expressive power within the text, specifically focusing on the form of *isti'ārah* (metaphor) in Surah Al-Baqarah.

Data were collected using a library research method by reviewing the verses in Surah Al-Baqarah that contain elements of *isti'ārah*. The selection of verses was carried out purposively, referring to classical and contemporary *balāghah* theories, and identifying relevant metaphorical forms.

During the identification process, it was found that several types of *isti'ārah* appeared in more than one verse. However, to maintain focus and depth of analysis, this study selected only one representative verse from each type of *isti'ārah* for more detailed examination. This selection was based on the clarity of the stylistic structure, the context of the verse, and the moral and spiritual messages contained within it.

The data were analyzed using content analysis techniques by classifying the types of *isti'ārah* according to the categories of *taṣrīhiyyah*, *makniyyah*, and *tamtsīliyyah*. Subsequently, symbolic meanings and moral-spiritual messages of each metaphor found were interpreted.

The results of the analysis are presented descriptively and analytically. Each data point (verse) is presented in full along with its translation, then analyzed for its form of *isti'ārah* and explained regarding its figurative meaning and function within the Qur'anic rhetorical context. The presentation is systematic and thematic to facilitate the reader's understanding of the relationship between language, meaning, and the messages conveyed through the metaphor.

Through this approach, the study not only describes linguistic forms but also uncovers the values contained within them in building spirituality and ethics in life.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Isti'ārah (استعارة) in language means **to ask for a loan**. Whereas in the terminology of *balāghah* (rhetoric), ***isti'ārah*** is:

مجاز استعارة هي تشبيه حذف أحد طرفيه، فعلقة المشبه دائمًا.

Isti'ārah is a *tashbīh* (simile) in which one of its two elements is omitted. Therefore, the relationship between the literal and figurative meanings is always one of resemblance (*musyābahah*) (Jarim & Amin, n.d.).

Meanwhile, according to Dr. H. Gasim Yamani, M.Ag, in his book, *isti'ārah* occurs when a word is used not in its literal meaning, because one of the comparative elements in *tashbīh*—either the object being compared (*musyabbah*) or the object of comparison (*musyabbah bih*)—is omitted (Dr. H. Gasim Yamani, M.Ag., n.d.)

A sentence is called *isti'ārah* if it fulfills the following three elements:

1. **Musta'ār minhu** (مسنعتاً عنه) — the word from which another is borrowed, or the *musyabbah bih*.
2. **Musta'ār lahu** (مسنعتاً له) — the word to which something is borrowed, or the *musyabbah*.
3. **Musta'ār** (مسنعتاً) — the borrowed attribute itself.

When viewed from the perspective of *musta'ār lahu* and *musta'ār minhu*—or, in other words, from the aspect of *qarīnah*—*isti'ārah* is divided into two types:

1. **Isti'ārah Taṣrīhiyyah** — This type explicitly mentions the *musyabbah bih* (the object of comparison), while the *musyabbah* (the object being compared) is not mentioned.
2. **Isti'ārah Makniyyah** — Conversely, in this type, only the characteristics of the *musyabbah bih* are mentioned, while the *musyabbah bih* itself is not explicitly stated.

When viewed from the form of the borrowed word (*lafz musta'ār*), *isti'ārah* is also divided into two types:

1. **Isti'ārah Aṣliyyah** — Occurs when the borrowed word originates from a basic noun (*ism jāmid*). Usually, this type is accompanied by an explicit clue (*qarīnah taṣrīhiyyah*).
2. **Isti'ārah Taba'iyyah** — Occurs when the *isti'ārah* takes place in a derived noun (*ism musytaq*) or a verb (*fi'l*). This type is accompanied by an implicit clue (*qarīnah makniyyah*).

From the aspect of the accompanying words, *Isti'ārah Taṣrīhiyyah* is further divided into three types:

1. **Isti'ārah Muraššahah** (استعارة مرشحة) — when it is accompanied by something compatible with the *musyabbah bih*.

Example:

أولئك الذين اشتروا الضلال لة بالهداى مماريحت تجارتهم

They are the ones who purchase misguidance in exchange for guidance; thus, their trade will never prosper.

What is meant by اشتراء (purchasing) for the *musyabbah* is (exchange), because both involve trading something disliked for something desired. It is called *isti'ārah taba'iyyah* because the derived form (*musytaq*) comes from اشتراء. Its *qarīnah* is *ḥāliyyah* (contextual), since there is no actual buying and selling taking place. Between الضلال (misguidance) and الهدى (guidance), the *qarīnah* lies in the expression التجارة (trade); therefore, the phrase *فما ربحت تجارتهم* (their trade did not prosper) is perfectly suitable for the *musyabbah bih*, meaning "return" or "outcome."

2. *Isti'ārah Mujarradah* — a form of metaphor in which the borrowed expression is followed by a word that suits the (٢٠١٤). (استعارة مجردة)

رأيت حبراف الكلية يلقى احملاضرة

Living a lecture is an attribute that suits the *musyabbah* (العام).

3. *Isti'ārah Muṭlaqah* — a type of metaphor that is not accompanied by any expression suitable either for the *musyabbah* or for the *musyabbah bih*.

Example:

رأيت البحريف الكيبة

In addition to the three main classifications of *isti'ārah* (based on *qarīnah*, linguistic form, and supporting elements), scholars of *balāghah* have also identified an additional type that does not fall under the category of *lafzīyyah*, namely ***Isti'ārah Tamthīliyyah***. This type conveys meaning through a complete analogy or parable that represents a state or concept.

The Function and Rhetorical Value of *Isti'ārah* in the Qur'an.

1. Clarifying Abstract Meanings

Isti'ārah facilitates the understanding of abstract concepts such as faith (*īmān*) or hypocrisy (*nifāq*) by transforming them into concrete imagery. For instance, hypocrites are depicted as those who kindle a fire, then Allah extinguishes it (Qur'an 2:17).

2. Evoking Emotional and Spiritual Effects

Metaphorical style can stir the reader's emotions. For example, the depiction of storms and darkness in Surah Al-Baqarah evokes an inner atmosphere that mirrors spiritual anxiety (Amalina et al., 2024).

3. Reinforcing Qur'anic Persuasion and Rhetoric

Isti'ārah enhances the persuasive power of the Qur'an through contrasting imagery such as light and darkness, guidance and misguidance, or faith and hypocrisy. Rhetorical techniques such as *ṭibāq* (antithesis) and *muqābalah* (contrast) are employed to emphasize moral and spiritual messages.

4. Demonstrating Aesthetic Beauty (*I'jāz*)

Isti'ārah also contributes to the manifestation of the Qur'an's literary miracle (*i'jāz*), presenting both beauty and depth of meaning within a single sequence of words.

5. Encouraging Contemplation and Spiritual Reflection

Metaphors such as "a darkened heart" or "a good tree" inspire readers to engage in deeper thought and self-reflection on their spiritual state.

As previously explained, *isti'ārah* is one form of *majāz lughawī* that possesses high expressive and rhetorical value in conveying moral and spiritual messages. Surah Al-Baqarah, as the longest chapter in the Qur'an, contains many verses that employ *isti'ārah* to strengthen meaning and evoke the reader's contemplation.

In this section, the researcher presents the results of an exploration of verses containing *isti'ārah* in Surah Al-Baqarah (verses 1–266). These verses are analyzed to identify the types of *isti'ārah* based on previously discussed classifications—namely, by *qarīnah* (*taṣrīhiyyah* and *makniyyah*), by linguistic form (*asliyyah* and

taba'iyyah), and by theme, whether moral or spiritual. This thematic distinction aims to trace the contribution of Qur'anic rhetoric in cultivating ethical awareness and spiritual faith among its readers.

Examples of *Isti'ārah* in the Qur'an (Surah Al-Baqarah 1–266) on Moral and Spiritual Themes. In Surah Al-Baqarah, several verses exhibit various forms of *isti'ārah*. However, to maintain analytical depth and consistency, this study discusses only one representative verse for each identified type of *isti'ārah*. These verses were selected based on their expressive strength and relevance to the moral and spiritual messages that form the focus of this study.

1. Based on the *Qarīnah*

a. *Isti'ārah Tasrīhiyyah*

خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ

Meaning: "Allah has sealed their hearts." (Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 7)

The word **خَتَمَ** (sealed) serves as the *musyabbah bih* (the object of comparison) that is explicitly stated, while the *musyabbah* (the thing being compared) refers to the *closedness of the heart toward the truth*. Because only the *musyabbah bih* is mentioned explicitly—the literal verb that is borrowed—this expression is categorized as *Isti'ārah Tasrīhiyyah*. Furthermore, this verse carries spiritual value, as it symbolizes the spiritual state of disbelief and rejection of divine guidance.

However, upon closer examination of the entire verse, the type of *isti'ārah* used is not limited to *Isti'ārah Tasrīhiyyah* alone, but can also be classified as *Isti'ārah Taba'iyyah*. This interpretation is supported by Murdiono, Muhammad Amin, and Hadi Nur Taufiq (2022) in their study, which refers to the thought of Az-Zamakhsyārī (1995) (Murdiono et al., 2022).

They explain that in this verse

خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ أَبْصَرِهِمْ غِشْوَةٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

The *musta'ār minhu* (the source of the borrowed meaning) includes the words **قُلُوبِهِمْ** (their hearts), **سَمْعِهِمْ** (their hearing), and **أَبْصَرِهِمْ** (their sight). Meanwhile, the *musta'ār* (the borrowed element) is omitted, namely **قَلْبٌ** (the physical heart), **أَذْنٌ** (the ear), and **عَيْنٌ** (the eye). The hearts, hearing, and sight of the disbelievers are likened to sealed containers due to their complete closure to receiving divine guidance.

The word **خَتَمَ** (sealed) in this verse literally means *to close a container*, but figuratively it expresses *spiritual closure or deadlock*. Therefore, when viewed from the aspect of the *musta'ār*, this verse falls under *Isti'ārah Taba'iyyah*, because the borrowed expression comes from a derived verb form (*fi'l*)—in this case, **خَتَمَ**.

Isti'ārah Taba'iyyah refers to a metaphor in which the borrowed term originates from a derived word (ism *musytaq*), and it can take the form of a verb (*fi'l*), a noun (ism) derived from a verb, or even a particle (*harf*) (Murdiono et al., 2022)

b. *Isti'ārah Makniyyah*

يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَالنَّبِيَّنَ أَمْثُوا

Meaning:

They [seek to] deceive Allah and those who believe. (Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 9)

When examined from the perspective of *musta'ār minhu* and *musta'ār*, this verse can be categorized as *Isti'ārah Makniyyah*, a type of metaphor in which human characteristics are attributed to non-human entities or abstract concepts. This figurative style is often referred to as *metaphor*, as it conveys meaning indirectly through imaginative and poetic imagery. This verse belongs to the spiritual category, as it depicts the hypocrisy of those who attempt to deceive Allah, while in reality, they only deceive themselves.

2. Based on the Linguistic Form

a. *Isti'ārah Aṣliyyah*

صِنْغَةُ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ أَخْسَنُ مِنْ اللَّهِ صِنْغَةً وَنَحْنُ لَهُ عَبْدُونَ

"[It is] the coloring of Allah! And who is better in coloring than Allah? And we are those who worship Him." (Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 138)

When this verse is examined from the aspect of its *musta'ār* (the borrowed expression), the structure used falls under the category of *Isti'ārah Aṣliyyah*, a type of *majāz* (figurative expression) in which the borrowed word (*musta'ār*) is a basic noun (*ism jāmid*)—not an adjective or a derived noun (*ism musytaq*). In this case, the word *ṣibghah* (صِنْغَة), meaning "coloring" or "dye", is used metaphorically.

The metaphorical meaning of *ṣibghah* in this context represents the religion or divine teaching of Allah as something that shapes, permeates, and firmly adheres to human nature, just as dye colors and clings to cloth. Therefore, this verse symbolizes the importance of holding firmly to the divine nature (*fītrah*) and the teachings of Allah that have been embedded within humans since their creation, as an expression of obedience to Him—reflecting the monotheistic teachings of Prophet Ibrāhīm. This verse thus belongs to the spiritual value category (At-Tahir, 2010).

b. *Isti'ārah Taba'iyyah*

الَّذِينَ يَنْقْضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيقَاتِهِ، وَيَنْقْطِعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ، أَنْ يُوَصِّلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ، أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ

"[They are] those who break the covenant of Allah after it has been affirmed, sever what Allah has commanded to be joined, and spread corruption on the earth. It is they who are the losers." (Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 27)

When this verse is viewed from the aspect of its *musta'ār* (borrowed expression), its linguistic structure can be classified as *Isti'ārah Taba'iyyah*, a type of metaphor that uses a derived or inflected word form (*ism musytaq*), including verbs. In this case, the word "يَنْقْضُونَ" (they break)—derived from a verb (*fi'l*)—is used figuratively (Murdiono et al., 2022) In this verse, the verb "to break" is employed metaphorically to describe the act of violating or being unfaithful to the divine covenant, namely the command to uphold *tawhīd* and obedience to Allah. This covenant was reaffirmed through the sending of prophets and the revelation of the

holy scriptures. However, some people choose to oppose these teachings by severing ties of kinship and spreading corruption on earth. Therefore, they are described as *the losers*—those who suffer loss both in this world and in the Hereafter. This verse reflects a moral value, emphasizing the ethical consequences of disobedience and betrayal of divine trust.

3. Based on the Completeness of the Elements of *Tasrihiyyah*

a. Murashshahah (مشحة)

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ آشَرُوا عَلَىٰ اللَّهِ بِأَنْهُدُوا فَمَا رَبَحُتْ تَجْرِيْهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ

“They are those who have purchased error in exchange for guidance, so their trade has brought no profit, nor were they guided.” (Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 175)

The use of the word اشتروا (*purchased*) in the verse above represents a form of *isti'ārah* (metaphor), in which the word serves as the *musta'ār minhu* (the borrowed term) / *musyabbah bih* (the object of resemblance) for the word استبدلوا (*exchanged*), which serves as the *musta'ār lahu* (the term being borrowed for) / *musyabbah* (the object being likened).

This is accompanied by a phrase consistent with the *musyabbah bih* / *musta'ār minhu*, namely بِحَتْ تِجَارَتِهِمْ فَمَا (*their trade was not profitable*). The example above falls under the category of *isti'ārah murashshahah*, because it includes an additional expression consistent with the *musyabbah bih* / *musta'ār minhu*. This verse reflects moral value.

b. Mujarradah

اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُمْ مِّنَ الظُّلْمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ

Allah is the Protector of those who believe; He brings them out of darkness into light. (Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 257)

The words الظُّلْمَاتِ (*darkness*) and النُّورِ (*light*) are used metaphorically to represent *misguidance* and *guidance*. Since the verse only implies meaning from the side of the *musyabbah* (faith and disbelief), without any additional wording that clarifies the *musyabbah bih* (darkness/light), it is categorized as *isti'ārah mujarradah*. The sentence conveys a symbolic meaning without explicit *qarīnah* (contextual indicator), and this verse also reflects moral value.

c. Mutlaqoh

صُمُّ بَعْدَمْ عُمُّي فَهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ

“They are deaf, dumb, and blind, so they will not return (to the right path).” (Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 18)

This verse states that “*they are deaf, dumb, and blind*,” which is clearly metaphorical (*isti'ārah*), because they are not physically deaf, mute, or blind, but rather spiritually and inwardly so.

Since there is no explicit contextual indicator (*qarīnah*) such as “*in matters of religion*” or “*spiritually*”, this belongs to the category of **isti'ārah mutlaqah**. Its rhetorical function is powerful—it vividly illustrates the unwillingness and complete inability to receive, convey, and comprehend guidance. It portrays an

extreme depiction of the inner emptiness of faith. This verse reflects **spiritual value**.

d. **Isti'ārah Tamthiliyyah**

أَيُوْدُ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ تَكُونَ لَهُ جَنَّةٌ مِّنْ تُخْيِلٍ وَأَعْنَبٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَرُ لَهُ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ الْثَمَرَاتِ وَأَصَابَةُ الْكَبْرِ وَلَهُ ذُرَيْثٌ ضُعْقَاءٌ فَأَصَابَهَا إِعْصَارٌ فِيهِ نَارٌ فَأَخْرَقَهُ كَذِلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ أَلَّا يَتَّلَكَّمُ تَنَقَّرُونَ

"Would any of you wish to have a garden of date-palms and grapevines, under which rivers flow, having all kinds of fruits therein, but he is stricken with old age and has weak offspring, and it is struck by a whirlwind containing fire and is burnt? Thus does Allah make clear His signs to you that you may reflect." (Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 266)

From the perspective of *musta'ār minhu* and *musta'ār lahu*, this verse is classified as **isti'ārah tamthiliyyah** (representational metaphor). This type of *isti'ārah* involves a sentence structure that is not meant in its literal sense but used figuratively because of a resemblance (*'alāqah musyābahah*) between the real and figurative meanings. Such usage is typically accompanied by a *qarīnah* (contextual clue) that prevents literal interpretation. In this type of *majāz*, both the apparent comparison (*adat al-tamthīl*) and the compared object (*musyabbah*) are omitted, while only the **musyabbah bih** (the figurative image) is highlighted.

This verse presents a parable of a man who owns a flourishing garden of date palms and grapevines, with rivers flowing beneath it and abundant fruits. But when he becomes old and dependent on the garden's yield to support his weak children, a whirlwind with fire strikes and burns it to ashes (Murdiono et al., 2022). This parable depicts the condition of a person who gives charity (*infāq*) without sincerity—perhaps by reminding others of his favor, hurting the recipient, or giving for the sake of showing off (*riyā'*). It is as though he had planted great hope through his charity, yet when he desperately needs its reward—either near the end of his life or in the Hereafter—it vanishes due to his own actions that nullify the value of his deeds. This verse reflects **moral value**.

1. **Moral Function**

Isti'ārah serves as a rhetorical device to strengthen ethical messages and awaken moral awareness.

Example 1: Emphasizing ethical loss

Metaphors such as "they purchased error with guidance" (Q.S. 2:16) use the imagery of a transaction to illustrate the grave loss of trading truth for falsehood. This clarifies the moral lesson about the consequences of wrongdoing, linked to self-integrity and justice.

Example 2: Warning against breach of faith and spiritual corruption

Metaphors like "they break Allah's covenant" (Q.S. 2:27) and "they deceive Allah and those who believe" (Q.S. 2:9) warn against moral and spiritual betrayal in social and religious life—the essence of ethical values studied in *balāghah*.

According to **Anwar Sidik and Rizka Sari (2025)**, *isti'ārah* in verses concerning ethics deepens the understanding of moral values through its aesthetic and rhetorical effect, leaving a more lasting impression (Sidik & Sari, n.d.). Moreover, *isti'ārah* also possesses a powerful role in conveying **spiritual awareness and inner strength**.

Example 3: Depicting inner states symbolically

Metaphors of *darkness and light*, and *deaf-mute-blind hearts* (Q.S. 2:18, 2:257) not only beautify the expression but also portray spiritual conditions—the closure

of hearts from guidance and the openness of souls to faith. These allow readers to feel inner realities rather than merely read literal meanings.

Example 4: Encouraging reflection and sincerity

Metaphors such as “*the dye (ṣibghah)*” (Q.S. 2:138) or the *parable of the burned garden* (Q.S. 2:266) are not mere symbols—they invite believers to contemplate, preserve the purity of faith, and uphold integrity in their deeds.

In contemporary studies, **Hasibuan & Pasaribu (2025)** found that *isti'ārah tamthīliyyah* in the Qur'an is systematically connected with thematic spiritual messages that reinforce the consistency of religious expression (Hasibuan & Pasaribu, 2025)

Table: 1 Summary of the Analysis of *Isti'ārah* in Surah Al-Baqarah

Excerpt of Verse	Type	Value	Metaphorical Explanation
خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ Qs.2:7	Tasrīhiyyah – Based on its <i>qarīnah</i> (contextual clue) Makniyyah – Based on <i>qarīnah</i>	Spiritual	Sealing the heart” → a metaphor for a heart closed off from the truth
يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا QS 2:9	Ashliyyah – Based on the form of the <i>lafaz</i> (word)	Spiritual	“Deceiving Allah” → attributing a human trait (deception) to a spiritual relationship
صِنْفَةُ الْأَلَّهِ وَقْنَ أَخْسَنُ مِنَ الْأَلَّهِ صِنْفَةٌ QS 2138	Taba'iyyah – Based on the form of the <i>lafaz</i>	Spiritual	“Allah's dye” → religion as something that adheres firmly to human nature
الَّذِينَ يَنْفَضِعُونَ عَنْهُدِ اللَّهِ Qs. 2:27	Murashshahah – Based on the completeness of its elements	Moral	“Breaking Allah's covenant” → a metaphorical act of disloyalty
آشَرُواْ الضَّلَالَةَ بِإِلَهَتِي Qs. 2:16	Mujarradah – Based on the completeness of its elements	Moral	“Buying misguidance with guidance” → a losing trade → a symbol of a morally wrong decision
يُخَرِّجُهُمْ مِنَ الظُّلْمَتِ إِلَى الْنُّورِ Qs2:257	Mutlaqah – Based on the completeness of its elements	Moral	“From darkness to light” → a symbol of misguidance versus the guidance of faith
صُمُّ بَكْمُ عُنْيَ فَهُمْ لَا يَنْرِعُونَ Qs 2 :18	Isti'ārah Tamthiliyyah – Representative or analogical metaphor	Spiritual	“Deaf, mute, and blind” → a metaphor for hearts unable to receive guidance
فَأَصَابَهَا إِغْصَاصٌ فِيهِ نَارٌ فَأَخْرَقَتْ Qs 2:226	Top of Form	Moral	“The parable of the burned garden” → symbolizes deeds rendered worthless due to insincerity

CONCLUSION

Isti'ārah is one of the forms of *majāz bayānī* in the science of *balāghah* (Arabic rhetoric). It refers to the depiction of meaning through borrowing a word from its

original meaning to a figurative one due to a resemblance (*musyābahah*). In the Qur'an, *isti'ārah* functions as an expressive and rhetorical device to clarify abstract concepts, evoke emotions, enhance persuasion, display literary beauty, and inspire spiritual reflection.

An examination of the verses in *Surah Al-Baqarah* (verses 1–266) shows that various types of *isti'ārah* are used with great precision and depth, such as:

1. *Isti'ārah tasrīhiyyah* (explicit mention of the *musyabbah bih*),
2. *Isti'ārah makniyyah* (mentioning only the attribute of the *musyabbah bih*),
3. *Isti'ārah ashliyyah* and *taba'iyyah* (based on the form of the word used),
4. As well as *murashshahah*, *mujarradah*, *mutlaqah*, and *tamthiliyyah* (based on completeness of elements and form of imagery).

The functions of *isti'ārah* in these verses can be divided into two major dimensions:

1. Moral Function – conveying ethical messages and warnings about spiritual loss due to moral deviation through metaphors of trade, betrayal, and deceit in the context of faith.
2. Spiritual Function – symbolizing the inner state of humans such as the closing of hearts, loss of divine guidance, and the importance of sincerity, as well as inviting deep reflection on one's relationship with God.

Thus, the use of *isti'ārah* in the Qur'an—particularly in *Surah Al-Baqarah*—not only demonstrates the eloquence and beauty of its language, but also serves as an essential instrument in the moral and spiritual education of humankind. This study affirms that a deep understanding of *balāghah* is vital for comprehending the messages of the Qur'an in a complete and reflective manner.

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