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Infinitude in the Qur'an: A Rhetorical-Rational Approach to Qur'anic Exegesis

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Abstract

This study explores the concept of infinitude in the *Qur'an* from a rhetorical–rational perspective, emphasizing its significance for understanding the text and its theological and intellectual dimensions. Its importance lies in presenting, for the first time, an integrated treatment of infinitude within Qur'anic discourse, thereby uncovering foundational aspects central to creed and offering exegetical implications that enrich both method and interpretation. The research problem arises from the absence of comprehensive studies that combine rhetorical analysis with rational reasoning in *tafsīr*, a gap that has at times led to literalist readings or interpretations that appear to conflict with Islamic theological principles. Employing an inductive methodology, the study collects relevant verses, examines them through *tafsīr* and Qur'anic sciences, and analyzes them in dialogue with the views of exegetes and theologians to refine meanings and intentions. The findings reveal three main contributions. First, six principal themes of infinitude in *Allah's* attributes are identified: pre-eternity and everlastingness, comprehensiveness of knowledge, absoluteness of power, transcendence beyond limit and place, vastness of mercy, and the comprehensive negation of all forms of limitation.

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Second, the *Qur'an* presents infinitude across three dimensions: divine attributes, eschatological realities such as the eternity of Paradise and Hell, and the discourse of obligation that magnifies divine words, blessings, and warnings. Third, the study underscores the necessity of integrating rhetorical and rational methodologies, as reliance on literal wording alone risks anthropomorphism or apparent contradiction, whereas a combined rhetorical–rational approach safeguards divine transcendence and clarifies the intended meaning.

Keywords: Interpretation; Infinitude; Eternity; Everlastingness; Qur'anic Rhetoric

INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an presents a divine discourse that is inimitable in its words, structures, and meanings. A distinctive feature of this discourse is its frequent reference to realities of an infinite nature that surpass the boundaries of human experience, such as Allah's limitless knowledge, the eternal bliss of Paradise, the permanence of the Hereafter, and the innumerable words of Allah. As the Qur'an declares: "*Say: If the sea were ink for the words of my Lord, the sea would be exhausted before the words of my Lord were exhausted, even if We brought the like of it as a supplement*" [al-Kahf 18:109]. Such expressions raise significant exegetical questions for human reason: how can infinite concepts revealed in scripture be understood within the finite limits of language and cognition?

Muslim theologians and philosophers have long engaged with these issues, exploring Allah's infinite attributes and His transcendence beyond temporal, spatial, and quantitative limits. Their efforts sought to reconcile the apparent sense of revelation with the dictates of sound reason. Nevertheless, there remains a need for a comprehensive study that integrates rhetorical (linguistic and stylistic) analysis with rational (theological and philosophical) inquiry in addressing the concept of infinitude in the Qur'an.

The nature of scientific research requires that it bring benefit both to knowledge and to society, thereby contributing to their advancement and development. In the Islamic vision, research is not intended to be a mere intellectual exercise, but rather a service to the community (Klaina 2024a). From this standpoint, the present study addresses a central theme: the Qur'anic discourse on absoluteness and infinitude. The significance of this subject increases in light of contemporary attempts to cast doubt on Islam and to

undermine the Prophetic Sunnah—an issue that has been examined in a number of specialized scholarly studies focusing on the defence of the Sunnah and the refutation of modern objections (Klaina & Yachaoui 2024; 2025). This research may also be seen as an extension of contributions in the field of religious discourse (Klaina 2023), particularly those studies that highlighted the Qur'anic dialogical method and its role in establishing the foundations of sound intellectual interaction between cultures and religions (Klaina 2024b).

This study responds to that need by offering a rhetorical-rational reading of Qur'anic exegesis focused on infinitude. It draws on the exegetical and rhetorical legacy of scholars such as ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī, as well as the philosophical and theological insights of Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037) and the school of Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī. At the same time, it seeks to maintain an objective approach, free from sectarian bias, while engaging relevant modern scholarship and expanding it into a more integrative vision.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this research consists in offering, for the first time, a comprehensive study of the concept of infinitude in Qur'anic discourse. It reveals the rhetorical depth of the Qur'an in portraying Allah's infinite knowledge and power and His transcendence beyond time, space, and limitation, thereby highlighting the majesty of divine expression. It also affirms the divine attribute of infinitude, which elevates the Divine Essence above temporal and spatial boundaries, while ensuring contemporary relevance by showing how the Qur'an simultaneously affirms Allah's infinitude and indicates the relativity of certain rulings in light of linguistic and legal contexts. In this way, the study responds both to those who restrict the text to a narrow historical frame and to those who extend its absoluteness without qualification.

Research Problem

The research problem centers on the following question: Does the Qur'an present the concept of infinitude within its texts? From this main inquiry, arise several subsidiary questions:

What is meant by infinitude in the context of Qur'anic and rhetorical studies?

Which Qur'anic passages describe attributes or realities as infinite—such as Allah's knowledge, the bliss of Paradise, the torment of Hell, or the eternity of His word—and how have scholars historically understood them?

What rhetorical devices does the Qur'an employ to convey infinite meanings (e.g., metonymy, hyperbole, simile), and how have these influenced the audience's understanding?

How have Muslim theologians and philosophers addressed the attribution of infinitude to Allah based on Qur'anic texts, and in what ways has this shaped their interpretation of verses?

What are the most significant previous studies on infinitude in the Qur'an, what methodological approaches did they adopt (linguistic, legal-theoretical, or philosophical), and what new contributions does this study seek to add in comparison?

The study assumes that an integrative rhetorical-rational approach provides a deeper understanding of verses expressing infinitude, a claim to be demonstrated through applied analysis of selected Qur'anic passages.

Research Objectives

This study seeks to achieve a set of clearly defined objectives, each arising from the elements of the research problem outlined above:

To define the concept precisely by presenting both linguistic and technical definitions of "infinitude" in the Qur'an and its sciences, and by clarifying its relationship with related terms (general/restricted, universal/particularized, absolute/qualified, infinite/finite), ensuring accuracy of usage throughout the study.

To conduct a comprehensive survey of Qur'anic verses that indicate infinitude, whether in Allah's eternal attributes or in the boundless descriptions of the Hereafter, and to classify these verses linguistically and rhetorically according to the dimension of infinitude (temporal, spatial).

To examine the motives behind the Qur'an's use of infinitude, such as intensifying meaning, magnifying significance, employing metaphorical imagery, or facilitating comprehension, with applied examples like the metaphor of the sea in depicting divine knowledge, and to assess their impact on the audience's perception.

To analyse early interpretations by classical scholars—especially exegetes and philosophers—of verses of eternal bliss, mercy, and encompassing punishment, and to evaluate how far their interpretations align with the principles of divine justice and transcendence, through a comparison of the transmitted and rational evidence they employed.

To present objectively the divergent theological and intellectual trends regarding divine infinitude, accompanied by scholarly critique aimed at fostering a comprehensive Qur'anic understanding, grounded in revelation and reason that is accessible to diverse perspectives.

To apply the findings to contemporary discourse by strengthening Muslim confidence in the universality and permanence of the Qur'anic message, and by responding to doubts that attempt to confine the text to the historical moment of revelation, highlighting the wisdom of both absoluteness and specification, and thereby supporting the Qur'an's timeless universality.

Together, these objectives aim to develop a deeper method of engaging the Qur'anic text—one that enables the exegete to recognize universality and inclusiveness without excess, while also remaining attentive to the limits of interpretation and specification without neglect.

Previous Studies

The Islamic scholarly heritage has addressed the notion of infinitude within exegetical, legal-theoretical, and theological frameworks. Among these contributions are those of philosophers and theologians, notably Ibn Sīnā, who laid philosophical foundations for a vision of infinity in works such as *al-Shifāʾ* and al-Najāt. He considered Allah's knowledge to be absolute, encompassing an infinite number of beings and forms, and viewed the Necessary Existent as transcendent of quantitative and qualitative limits. His theory influenced the philosophical–mystical interpretation of verses such as "*He is the First and the Last…*" [al-Ḥadīd 57:3], which is explained as affirming the absoluteness of divine existence without beginning or end. Our study engages these rational insights with objectivity and neutrality, grounded in the consensus of the Muslim community regarding Allah's transcendence beyond place and limit—"*There is nothing like unto Him*" [al-Shūrā 42:11]—and connects them to Qur'anic texts and rhetorical analysis. It also compares the views of Ashʿarī theologians, Muʿtazilīs, and philosophers in order to develop a balanced,

contemporary Qur'anic understanding of divine infinitude. To date, no dedicated study of infinitude in the Qur'an has been identified, except for scattered discussions in works of *tafsīr* and related fields; this gap has motivated the present research to contribute to enriching the Islamic intellectual heritage.

METHODOLOGY

To meet the objectives of this study and answer its research questions, we adopted a composite methodology that integrates approaches from the Islamic sciences and linguistic studies.

Inductive method: Qur'anic verses relevant to the theme—particularly those expressing infinite meanings—were traced and compiled. These verses were then examined within their Qur'anic context, alongside a review of the interpretations of al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, and others, in order to grasp the understanding of the early generations as an initial step.

Analytical method: The collected texts were studied using the tools of Arabic rhetoric (*bayān*, *maʿānī*, and *badīʿ*) to determine the scope of generality, clarify intended meanings, examine forms of hyperbole, and analyze the syntactic structures that frame these expressions.

CONCEPT, THEORICAL FOUNDATIONS, AND MANIFESTATIONS OF INFINITUDE IN QUR'ANIC DISCOURSE

Definition of al-Lā-Mutanāhī (Infinitude) linguistically and technically

Linguistically, *al-nihāyah ("the end")* denotes the ultimate limit or final point of something, namely the point at which it ceases and cannot extend further. From this, *al-tanāhī ("finiteness")* signifies the act of reaching such an utmost boundary. This is illustrated by the Qur'anic expression *Sidrat al-Muntahā ("the Lote Tree of the Utmost Boundary"),* which indicates the furthest point of perception, as well as by the phrase *anhaytu ilayhi al-kitāb ("I delivered the book to him"),* meaning to convey it to its very end (Ibn Manẓūr 1994, 15:344). *Al-lā nihāyah ("infinity")* denotes that which has no limits in time or space and no end whatsoever, and *al-lā mutanāhī ("the infinite")* refers to that which cannot possibly have an end (ʿUmar 2008, 3:2297-2298).

Technically, *al-lā mutanāhī ("the infinite")* signifies the absolute absence of any limit or end, in contrast to *al-lā maḥdūd ("the unlimited"),* a term sometimes used with a slightly different nuance. The concept of infinity encompasses two main dimensions. The first is quantitative: that which surpasses every possible measure. The second is qualitative: that which pertains to transcendent attributes of perfection, such as the never-ending attributes of Allah. Philosophical discussions further distinguish between positive infinity—an actualized and perfect state of completion—and negative infinity, which refers to potential infinity, as in numbers capable of increasing without end. Theologians employed this notion to affirm that Allah and His attributes are free from any limitation, and that the perfection of His attributes knows no end (Dīb 2024; Āl Dūkhī 2020).

Infinitude in the Description of Allah Almighty

The Eternal Pre-existence and Everlastingness of Allah (The First and the Last)

Allah the Exalted described Himself as eternal and everlasting in His saying: *"He is the First [nothing is before Him] and the Last [nothing is after Him] …"* [al-Ḥadīd: 3]. Exegetes interpreted this to mean that His existence precedes all beings without beginning and follows them without end (al-Ṭabarī 2001, 22:385). Everything other than Him is created, whereas His existence is perpetual and unlimited. Al-Ṭabarī, in his commentary on His saying: *"The Ever-Living, the One who sustains and protects all that exists"* [al-Baqarah, 2: 255], explained that *"The Ever-Living"* is the One whose life is eternal, without beginning or end—indicative of the perfection of His essence and His transcendence above annihilation and non-existence (al-Ṭabarī 2001, 4:527). Scholars of creed also affirmed this reality, as al-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 321 AH) stated: *"He is ancient without beginning and everlasting without end"* (al-Ṭaḥāwī 1993, 33), thus exalting Allah above non-existence and perishing.

The All-Encompassing Knowledge of Allah and the Infinitude of His Known Realities

The two verses in Luqmān:

"And if all the trees on the earth were pens and the sea (were ink wherewith to write), with seven seas behind it to add to its (supply), yet the Words of Allah would not be The sea would be exhausted" [Luqmān, 31: 27], and: *"Say (O Muhammad to mankind): If the sea were ink for (writing), the words of my Lord, surely, the sea would be exhausted before the Words of my Lord would be finished, even if We brought (another sea) like it for its aid"* [al-Kahf, 18: 109],

affirm the absolute nature of Allah's knowledge and negate any limitation, employing a vivid illustrative image that highlights the inability of finite material means to encompass His infinite knowledge (Ibn ʿĀshūr 1984, 16:54). Al-Rāzī (d. 606 AH) explained that the context of the verse in Sūrat Luqmān refutes the misconception of restricting Allah's dominion to the heavens and the earth. Consequently, the following verse negates this limitation, affirming that the realities and secrets encompassed in Allah's knowledge are beyond all quantity and lie outside human capacity (al-Rāzī 1999, 25:127). Everything in creation is finite, whereas Allah's knowledge is absolute and boundless—neither confined by quantity nor restricted in kind—and none can grasp of it except what Allah wills for His servants to comprehend.

The Absolute Power of Allah That Nothing Can Overcome

Qur'anic texts, such as His saying: *"Certainly, Allah has power over all things"* [al-Baqarah, 2: 20]*,* indicate the absolute and comprehensive nature of divine power over all possible things, without restriction or limit. Scholars of creed from Ahl al-Sunnah established that Allah's power is such that nothing can incapacitate it, for it is an eternal essential attribute related to all possible entities (al-Ṭaḥāwī 1993, 31). Al-Ghazālī stated that possibilities are infinite, and therefore Allah's power over them is likewise infinite (al-Ghazālī 2004, 52). Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456 AH) and al-Qurṭubī (d. 671 AH) agreed, affirming that divine power is boundless in quantity and that incapacity is inconceivable alongside it (Ibn Ḥazm 1979, 64; al-Qurṭubī 1964, 5:409). Muslim philosophers, such as Ibn Sīnā, expressed this truth in rational terms, explaining that Allah is inherently capable of everything that emanates from the realm of possibilities (Ibn Sīnā 1980, 58). These various perspectives—despite differences in approach—unanimously affirm the absoluteness of divine power, its infinitude, and its complete encompassing of all possible entities.

Declaring Allah's Transcendence Above Boundaries and Spatial Location

Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah, based on Allah's saying: *"And He is with you (by His knowledge) wherever you are"* [al-Ḥadīd, 57: 4], affirm Allah's transcendence above spatial boundaries and sensory directions, as He is the Creator of time and space (al-Hādī 2017; al-Nādī 2018). Their creeds state: *"The six directions do not contain Him like the rest of created things"* (Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz al-Ḥanafī 1990, 1:260)*,* emphasizing the negation of any spatial confinement from His essence. It is narrated from ʿAlī (may Allah be pleased with him) that affirming a limit or direction for Allah amounts to corporealism and

anthropomorphism, both of which are false. A similar position was articulated by *Muslim philosophers such as Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī* (al-Shīrāzī 2001, 174) (d. 1050 AH)*, who* maintained that the Divine Essence is not subject to boundary or encompassment, thereby affirming His transcendence above the attributes of contingent beings (Ibn al-Athīr 1979, 1:136).

The Infinite in the Scenes of the Day of Resurrection and the Hereafter

The Qur'an's Affirmation of the Eternity of Paradise and Hellfire

The Noble Qur'an affirms the everlasting nature of the recompense in the Hereafter. It describes the believers in Paradise as abiding therein forever in numerous places, including His saying: "… *abiding therein forever*" [al-Nisāʾ, 4: 57] (al-Suhayyān 2018). Al-Ṭabarī interpreted this as meaning *"without end"* (al-Ṭabarī 2001, 11:383)*,* and Ibn Kathīr explained it as an eternity without departure or cessation (Ibn Kathīr 2010, 6:249). Regarding the disbelievers, Allah says: "*Verily, the Mujrimun (criminals, sinners, disbelievers) will be in the torment of Hell, to abide therein forever*" [al-Zukhruf, 43: 74]. Al-Qurṭubī noted that their punishment is neither temporary nor alleviated, and that they remain in constant despair of mercy (al-Qurṭubī 1964, 16:115). Other verses confirm the uninterrupted continuation of their torment, such as: "…*whenever time it abates, We shall increase for them the fierceness of the fire*" [al-Isrāʾ, 17: 97]*,* coupled with the negation of any injustice in this: "*We wronged them not, but they were the Zalimun (polytheists, wrong-doers)*" [al-Zukhruf, 43: 76]. This establishes that such eternal afterlife is in accordance with divine justice and wisdom.

Bliss Without End and Punishment Without Cessation

The Qur'an affirms the perpetual bliss of Paradise for the believers, as in His saying: "… *a gift without an end*" [Hūd, 11: 108], meaning one that is never cut off; "… *its provision is eternal*" [al-Raʿd, 13: 35]; and "… *for them will be an endless rewards that will never stop*" [Fuṣṣilat, 41: 8]. These texts indicate that the bliss of the Hereafter is permanent, neither diminishing nor ending. Ibn Kathīr (d. 774 AH) explained that the description of the gift as uninterrupted serves to dispel any notion of the bliss ending after the mention of divine will (Ibn Kathīr 2010, 4:476).

Conversely, the verses affirm the perpetuity of the punishment of Hell's inhabitants and its non-alleviation, as in: "*Never will It have a complete killing effect on them so that they die, nor shall its torment be lightened for them*" [Fāṭir, 35: 36]—meaning Allah will not cause them to die and thus rest (al-Māwardī n.d., 3:148; Ibn al-Jawzī 2001, 3:513), nor will He lighten their

torment—that is, nothing will be diminished from their punishment (Ibn ʿĀdil 1998, 12:42). Likewise is His saying: "*As often as their skins are roasted through, We shall change them for other skins*" [al-Nisāʾ, 4: 56], indicating the renewal of pain. Accordingly, the eternity of the inhabitants of Paradise and Hell is a complete eternity, unlimited in time, manifested in bliss that never ends and torment that never ceases.

The Eternity of the Hereafter in the Belief of the Exegetes and Theologians

The scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah unanimously agreed on the perpetual existence of Paradise and Hell, and the everlasting residence of their inhabitants within them without annihilation. Al-Ṭaḥāwī stated that both are created and will never perish (al-Ṭaḥāwī 1994, 73), basing this on definitive texts such as: "*Wherein they will abide for ever*" [al-Aḥzāb, 33: 65] and "… *then, verily for him is the Fire of Hell he shall dwell therein forever*" [al-Jinn, 72: 23]. The vast majority of early and later scholars affirmed this perpetuity (Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz 1990, 2:620), rejecting the isolated view of the annihilation of Hell, which is outweighed by the explicit textual evidence of eternal duration (Ibn Taymiyya 1995, 28).

Nevertheless, throughout history there have been dissenting views on the matter of eternal perpetuity:

***The* Khawārij *and the* Muʿtazilah**, despite their methodological differences, agreed on the perpetuation of punishment for all who enter Hell, without exception for monotheists—making those guilty of major sins eternally condemned like disbelievers. Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz (d. 792 AH) cited this as one of eight positions on the eternity of Hell (Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz 1990, 2:624). The Muʿtazilah denied intercession for sinners and held that the eternal punishment of those guilty of major sins was a requirement of divine justice according to their conception (ʿAbd al-Jabbār n.d., 688-690). *Ahl al-Sunnah* opposed them, citing the recurrently transmitted authentic ḥadīths indicating the release of monotheists from Hell, and asserting that the texts of threat concern disbelievers alone, not other sinners (al-Ashʿarī 2005, 2:354).

***Jahm ibn Ṣafwān** (d. 128 AH),* founder of the Jahmiyyah sect, maintained that both Paradise and Hell will eventually cease to exist, with the bliss of the former and the torment of the latter ending after a period. This contradicts the recurrent texts affirming the eternity of both abodes, and *Ahl al-Sunnah* deemed this opinion invalid, with some

scholars of his era declaring him an unbeliever for this view due to its blatant opposition to revelation (Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz 1990, 2: 620).

Other isolated views emerged regarding the annihilation of both abodes—some agreeing with Jahm ibn Ṣafwān in their mutual extinction, others claiming the annihilation of Hell alone without Paradise. This latter position was attributed to some early scholars and mystics such as Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638 AH). Certain extreme Sufis went so far as to claim that the inhabitants of Hell would adapt to the punishment until they found pleasure in it rather than pain (Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz 1990, 2:624-625). Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf (d. 840 AH) asserted that the torment would continue until Allah removed their sensation, rendering them completely still without movement (Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz 1990, 2:621-625).

The majority of scholars rejected these views for contradicting definitive texts, and the settled belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah* remains that Paradise and Hell will endure forever without annihilation, as attested by the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the consensus of the Ummah (Ibn Ḥazm n.d., 173; Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz 1990, 2:614).

The Vastness of Paradise and Spatial Infinity in the Hereafter

Among the manifestations of infinity in the scenes of the Hereafter are those indicated in Qur'anic verses such as: *"… and for Paradise as wide as the heavens and the earth"* [Āl ʿImrān, 3: 133], pointing to the vastness and expanse of Paradise—not as a precise geometric measurement, but in figurative language conveying its enormity beyond human comprehension. Mentioning its *"width"* denotes immensity, and length is often even greater, implying that the dimensions of Paradise are not confined to worldly standards (al-Qurṭubī 1964, 4:205). Al-Zuhrī (d. 124 AH) remarked that its length is known only to Allah, and that Allah did not mention its length due to its greatness. Al-Qurṭubī, after citing various interpretations, concluded that the Qur'an did not intend to specify a measurement for the width, but to convey that it is greater than anything the human eye has seen or the mind has conceived.

The majority of scholars cited such verses as proof that Paradise is already created and exists now, as in: *"Prepared for Al-Muttaqun"* [Āl ʿImrān, 3: 133] (al-Qurṭubī 1964, 4:204-205), contrary to the Muʿtazilah and Qadariyyah who claimed, based on rational speculation, that its creation would be deferred until the Day of Resurrection. The scholars of *Ahl al-Sunnah* rejected this view, affirming that the realities of the Hereafter transcend

customary notions of time and space, and are accessible only through infallible revelation (al-Ṭaḥāwī 1994, 2:615).

THE RHETORICAL AND RATIONAL INTEGRATION IN UNDERSTANDING THE ABSOLUTE AND THE INFINITE

The Role of Context and Indicators in Specification and Restriction (The Rhetorical Method)

Context plays a fundamental role in determining the meaning of infinite or general expressions; a word cannot be detached from its context and its meaning assumed independently without consideration of the surrounding indicators. ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī established that eloquence and meaning are not judged on a word in isolation, but in its connection with what precedes and follows. He stated:

"We do not ascribe eloquence to a word when cut off, but only when it is joined to other words, its meaning linked to what precedes and follows" (al-Jurjānī 2001, 257).

Thus, meaning is understood within the linguistic context and the associated indicators (Naṣr 2019).

Reliance on context and indicators in exegesis is not a merely formal or rhetorical matter, but a methodological necessity for grasping Allah's intended meaning in His Book. The sources of *tafsīr* and Qur'anic sciences have unanimously affirmed that understanding the Qur'anic discourse depends on awareness of its context. Al-Zarkashī emphasized that contextual indication is among the strongest evidences (al-Zarkashī 1957, 2:200). Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd clarified its role in explaining what is ambiguous and specifying what is indeterminate (Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd 1987, 2:216). Ibn al-Qayyim explicitly stated that context is fundamental in qualifying the absolute, specifying the general, and precisely identifying the intended meaning, warning that neglecting it leads to error in understanding and inference (Ibn al-Qayyim n.d., 4:9). Likewise, al-Jurjānī -previously emphasized- stressed that the coherence of speech within its context is essential for determining its meaning, and that detaching a word from its position undermines its significance.

Accordingly, the rhetorical methodology based on tracing contexts and indicators constitutes a primary tool for regulating the meanings of texts, distinguishing between general and particular, absolute and restricted. It is the very method followed by the

Prophet (peace be upon him), the Companions, and scholars in understanding and applying the revealed texts.

The Methodology of Understanding Texts between the Literal and the Figurative

It is evident from the methodology of the scholars regarding the Hereafter that they adhered to the texts as they were revealed, without resorting to figurative reinterpretation (*taʾwīl*) or negation (*taʿṭīl*), especially concerning eternal perpetuity in Paradise and Hell, as it is established in a definitive form that does not admit metaphor. Temporal infinity (*ḵhulūd*) is thus decisively established by textual evidence, and the text is taken literally where such literalism is warranted. As for spatial infinity—the vastness of Paradise and Hell—the Qur'an conveys it through approximate expressions accessible to human understanding, such as analogies to the heavens and the earth. These references are to be taken in their intended sense without overinterpretation. They function as illustrative parables for the purpose of magnification, rather than as indications of the exact geometric dimensions of Paradise. The early generations unanimously agreed on consigning *(tafwīḍ)* matters that Allah has reserved for His own knowledge, while affirming the realities of the unseen as conveyed by revelation, without delving into modalities that lie beyond human perception. This represents the methodological balance: to take the texts at their apparent, literal meaning when contextual indicators point to the literal sense (as in the case of eternal perpetuity), and to understand them metaphorically or as approximations when the context so indicates (as in the vastness of Paradise and Hell, per al-Qurṭubī (1964, 4:205). By this approach, we affirm what Allah has affirmed for Himself, for His allies, and for His enemies in the Hereafter, without distortion or negation, holding an unequivocal belief in eternal perpetuity, while consigning its exact nature and reality to the knowledge and wisdom of Allah.

The Philosophers' Perspective on the Question of Eternity and Infinity

Islamic philosophy addressed the issue of the soul's immortality and its reward or punishment through a rational method. Ibn Sīnā demonstrated, with rational proofs, that the soul is a simple, immaterial substance that does not perish, remaining after the body's annihilation because it is not intrinsically dependent on it for its formation (Ibn Sīnā 2018, 11). In this regard, Thales, Heraclitus, and Parmenides, who asserted that the soul is eternal and indestructible, influenced him (Ḥamad 2022). However, some philosophers -under the influence of Greek thought- denied the bodily resurrection, affirming instead a purely

spiritual return (al-ʿIrāqī 2004, 788). Al-Ghazālī (d. 505 AH) deemed this an explicit act of disbelief (al-Ghazālī n.d., 307-309), as it contradicts definitive Qur'anic and Prophetic texts. Accordingly, the people of the faith unanimously invalidated the philosophers' interpretations of the details of the Last Day, adhering to the apparent meanings of the texts in affirming the reward and punishment of both body and soul together, while accepting that the manner of this lies beyond human comprehension.

In the context of the eternity of the Hereafter, some theologians discussed the question of infinity rationally in relation to time and space in the afterlife. For example, Jahm ibn Ṣafwān denied the everlastingness of bliss and punishment, claiming that the existence of infinite future events was impossible and rejecting the notion of an open-ended temporal sequence in the future. *Ahl al-Sunnah* refuted this foundational premise, affirming the distinction between the impossibility of an infinite regress with no beginning and the possibility of an endless succession of future events by Allah's will. Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf agreed with this principle but argued for the cessation of movement in Paradise and Hell, with a transition to a state of complete stillness (Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz 1990, 2:621).

Ahl al-Sunnah clarified the invalidity of this rationalistic approach to matters of the unseen, affirming that the perpetual nature of bliss and punishment is true, and that Allah does whatever He wills, capable of creating an eternal recompense without end, as established in definitive texts such as: "*Certainly, Allah has power over all things*" [al-Baqarah, 2: 20].

The Ummah's Consensus on Denying Limitation of Allah and Affirming His Absolute Perfection

The schools of Islamic creed, despite their methodological differences, agreed on a unifying principle: the absolute affirmation of Allah's attributes of perfection and His transcendence above all deficiency, limitation, or resemblance to creation (al-Rifāʿī 2022). Abū Ḥanīfah expressed this by saying: "*He is a thing unlike other things… He has no limit, no opposite, no equal, and no likeness*" (Abū Ḥanīfa 1999, 14). The ʿAqīdah al-Ṭaḥāwiyyah states: "He is ancient without beginning, everlasting without end" (al-Ṭaḥāwī 1994, 31). It is also narrated from ʿAlī (may Allah be pleased with him) that he denied any limit or measure for Allah's essence (al-ʿAlawī 2002, 1:87). The majority of scholars agreed on interpreting or consigning (Tafwīḍ) the meaning of scriptural texts regarding the attributes -such as

"*descending*" or "*establishing Himself*" (*Istiwā'*)- in a manner consistent with Allah's saying: "*There is nothing like Him*" [al-Shūrā, 42: 11], thereby affirming the principle of absolute transcendence, supported by both revealed texts and rational proofs.

An Integrated Applied Reading of Selected Models

This section aims to present applied Qur'anic models in which the concepts of infinitude and absoluteness are manifested, employing an integrative methodology that combines linguistic analysis of context, historical exegetical reading, and rational treatment. This will be illustrated through four main models that highlight the interplay of these tools in understanding the Qur'anic text:

Model One: Verses of Challenge and Qur'anic Inimitability

The verses of challenge, such as the Almighty's saying: "*Say: If the mankind and the jinn were together …*" [al-Isrā', 17: 88], and His saying: "*Then produce a sūrah of the like thereof*" [al-Baqarah, 2: 23], indicate the absoluteness of the challenge, encompassing all humans and jinn in every era, unrestricted by time or group. The exegetes affirmed this meaning, among them al-Ṭabarī, who emphasized the perpetual significance of inimitability and its enduring impact through the ages (al-Ṭabarī 2001, 1:4). This absoluteness points to the infinitude of the facets of Qur'anic inimitability and their continual renewal- a consensus among scholars. Were the challenge limited or particular, its miraculous nature would lapse after the specified time. Its absolute formulation thus establishes its eternal validity as a challenge until the Day of Resurrection (al-Sayyid 2018; Maḥmūd 2018).

Model Two: The Verse "There is nothing like Him" [Ash-Shūrā: 11]

This verse is among the clearest texts affirming the principle of Allah's absolute transcendence, negating any similarity to Him in all respects, while simultaneously affirming His attributes of perfection -as in "*And He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer*"- yet without any anthropomorphism. It is the most explicit verse in the Qur'an denying any resemblance to Allah, thereby negating limitation and modality in His essence.

From the linguistic and rhetorical perspective, exegetes have noted that the addition of the kāf in kamithlihi serves as emphasis -whether the kāf is considered pleonastic or mithl is; in either case, the outcome is a doubled negation of resemblance. This rhetorical construction conveys an absolute negation of similarity, meaning that nothing is like Him

in any respect, even in the remotest conceivable aspect of likeness (al-Qurṭubī 1964, 16:8; al-Sayyid 2018; Maḥmūd 2018; al-ʿAwwāmī 2024).

From the theological and exegetical perspective, scholars regard this verse as a foundational text in the doctrine of divine transcendence. Al-Qurṭubī reported the consensus of the Salaf that Allah does not resemble anything in His essence, attributes, or acts. He also pointed out that verbal similarity in the names of attributes (such as "*All-Hearing*" and "*All-Seeing*") does not entail actual equivalence, because the attributes of the Creator are eternal, infinite, and unrestricted, whereas the attributes of creation are originated, finite, and limited. This is the creed of Ahl al-Ḥaqq (the People of Truth) and *Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamāʿah* (al-Qurṭubī 1964, 16:8-9).

Thus, the absolute negation in this verse attests to Allah's infinite perfection, free from every limitation or likeness, making it one of the strongest textual proofs for His transcendence and for rejecting any conception that would confine His essence or attributes within human categories or limitations.

Model Three: Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ

Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ is among the most explicit declarations affirming Allah's absolute unity and transcendence beyond any likeness or deficiency (al-Thuwaynī 2017). It conveys this meaning in concise wording yet with comprehensive depth. The Prophet (PBUH) said about this sūrah: "*...and it is equivalent to one-third of the Qur'an*" (Muslim 2007, 2:329-330, no. 812) -because it encompasses the fundamentals of creed and the meanings of tawḥīd. We will examine some of its key terms to clarify the concepts of absoluteness and infinitude within it:

"*He is Allāh, the One*" (*Allāhu Aḥad*) [al-Ikhlāṣ, 112:1]: The word Aḥad denotes absolute uniqueness in essence and attributes. It is more emphatic than wāḥid, as it negates multiplicity or composition. Al-Rāzī explained that its use as an indefinite noun indicates that this "*oneness*" transcends human categories of measurable unity; it is a unity free of division or resemblance (al-Rāzī 1999, 32:363), unlike anything in the divisible material world. Thus, Allāhu Aḥad affirms that Allah is utterly unique in His essence, names, attributes, and acts -having no equal or second in any respect.

"*Allāh-us-Ṣamad*" [al-Ikhlāṣ, 112:2]: The early generations (*Salaf*) interpreted al-Ṣamad as the One perfect in sovereignty, sought for all needs (Ibn al-Jawzī 2001, 4:506),

independent of everything while all depend on Him. This signifies absolute perfection, immutability, and transcendence from change or influence. Al-Rāzī noted that the interpretation "*having no hollow*" must be understood metaphorically, as a denial of corporeal qualities—affirming His permanence and all-encompassing attributes (al-Rāzī 1999, 32:361-362). Ṣamadiyyah therefore points to Allah's absolute, infinite perfection, untouched by decay, deficiency, or alteration.

"*He neither begets nor is born*" (*Lam yalid wa lam yūlad*) [al-Ikhlāṣ, 112:3]: This verse negates from Allah both origin and offspring, thereby affirming His pre-eternity, everlastingness, and transcendence above the qualities of created beings. Early scholars explained this, such as the report from Ubayy ibn Kaʿb:

"*Al-Ṣamad is the One who does not beget, nor is He begotten; for everything born must die, and everything that dies is inherited from, while Allah, Mighty and Sublime, does not die, nor is He inherited from*" (al-Tirmidhī 2007, 6:94-95, no. 3364).

This narration, however, is transmitted with a weak chain. Nonetheless, the verse affirms Allah's perfect life, absolute oneness, and transcendence beyond generation and extinction—the processes that characterize finite beings.

"*And there is none comparable to Him*" (*Wa lam yakun lahu kufuwan aḥad*) [al-Ikhlāṣ, 112:4]: This verse negates all forms of equivalence to Allah. Kufuwan encompasses the ideas of peer, equal, or match, and the negation here is absolute, covering all beings. It reaffirms Allah's absolute singularity in essence, attributes, and acts—perfectly embodying divine infinitude and transcendence beyond all bounds and parallels.

In summary, *Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ* is a condensed exposition of absoluteness and infinitude in Allah's unity. His aḥadiyyah affirms His complete uniqueness, His ṣamadiyyah affirms His absolute perfection and independence, the negation of begetting affirms His eternity and perpetuity, and the negation of equivalence affirms His absolute singularity above all creation.

Muslim philosophers, including Ibn Sīnā, rationally demonstrated Allah's oneness and the impossibility of likeness in ways consistent with revelation. He argued that the Necessary Existent cannot be multiple, for multiplicity requires distinction, and that which is necessary in every respect admits no differentiation. The completeness of existence and the rank of necessary being exclude any partner or equal—corresponding to the Qur'anic

message of Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ in its affirmation of aḥadiyyah, ṣamadiyyah, and the negation of equivalence. This reflects the harmony between rational demonstration and Qur'anic expression in affirming Allah's absolute unity.

The Fourth Model: Other Verses Indicating the Absoluteness of Divine Perfection

The Throne Verse (*Āyat al-Kursi*) functions as a comprehensive Qur'ānic paradigm that embodies both absoluteness and infinitude through its affirmation of unrestricted divine attributes: self-subsisting life and perfect self-sustenance— "*the Ever-Living, the One who Sustains and protect all that exists*" [al-Baqarah, 2:255]; the negation of drowsiness and sleep— "*Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him*"; the majesty of dominion— "*His Kursī extends over the heavens and the earth*"; the perfection of power— "*and preserving them*"; and the uniqueness of exaltedness and greatness— "*He is the Most High, the Most Great*" Exegetes, including al-Qurṭubī, affirmed that this verse encompasses the loftiest attributes of divine perfection expressed in absolute terms. It mentions life, knowledge, dominion, power, will, and all-encompassing awareness—all presented in unrestricted form—to signify Allah's infinite perfection in each of these attributes.

Similarly, His saying, "*And He is the All-Knower of everything*" [al-Baqarah, 2:29], indicates that divine knowledge encompasses both existents and non-existents without exception, a manifestation of boundless and absolute knowledge (al-Saʿdī 2000, 754).

From these examples, it becomes evident that the integrative linguistic, exegetical, and rational methodology enables a deeper analysis of expressions carrying absolute meaning and connects them to theological concepts such as eternality, perfection, and transcendence. This reveals the harmony of the Qur'ānic text with rational requirements in affirming divine unity and Allah's freedom from limitations or deficiencies.

These Qur'ānic paradigms thus highlight the methodological efficacy of integrative reading in analysing texts that contain verbal absoluteness, such as verses of challenge, negation, and generality, and in relating them to theological concepts such as the eternal miracle, absolute transcendence, and divine perfection. The study employed three principal tools: linguistic analysis to uncover the semantic scope of words from the perspectives of absoluteness and generality; exegetical analysis through the insights of classical commentators; and rational-philosophical analysis to demonstrate the coherence between textual meaning and rational judgment. This methodology illustrates the integration of interpretive tools in achieving a precise reading of the Qur'ānic text, while also highlighting

the consonance between revelation and reason in matters of divine unity and transcendence.

Infinity in the Discourse of Obligation, Promise, and Threat

The Greatness of Allah's Words That Never End

In the verse, *"And if all the trees on the earth were pens and the sea [were ink wherewith to write]…"* [Luqmān, 31: 27], the Qur'an affirms the infinitude of Allah's words, demonstrating the vastness of His knowledge and the perfection of His power. The meaning is that Allah's words- encompassing commands, acts of creation, and wonders - never come to an end; even if all the trees became pens and the seas ink, these would be exhausted before His words were exhausted. Al-Rāzī explained that *"the words of Allah"* refer to the marvels of His power, connected to His creative command *"Be,"* thereby making them among His eternal and limitless attributes (al-Rāzī 1999, 25:127). Ibn Kathīr (2010, 6:128) emphasized that the verse highlights the greatness of Allah's attributes and actions, noting that the mention of *"seven seas"* is not a literal limit but an expression of magnitude, for there is no limit to the divine words that signify His knowledge and power.

From a *kalām (theological)* perspective, al-Rāzī stressed the need to distinguish between *"the words of Allah"* as eternal, uncreated divine meanings and commands, and the verbal expressions and letters used to convey revelation, which are created and finite (al-Rāzī 1999, 25:128). In this sense, the verse serves as evidence for the infinitude of Allah's attribute of speech in meaning, though not in letters or sounds.

Allah's Blessings That Cannot Be Counted

In the verse, "…*and if you count the blessings of Allah, you will never be able to count them*" [Ibrāhīm 14: 34; al-Naḥl 16: 18], the Qur'an explicitly asserts man's inability to enumerate Allah's blessings, whether by partial counting or by complete reckoning. Al-Kirmanī (d. 505 AH) explained that *iḥṣāʾ* means reaching the final number of something, which here implies the impossibility of arriving at a full enumeration of blessings (al-Kirmānī n.d., 1:603). Ibn ʿAṭiyya (d. 542 AH) stated that blessings are renewed at every moment of human life and thus cannot be exhaustively counted (Ibn ʿAṭiyya 2001, 3:385). Al-Khāzin (d. 741 AH) further observed that this incapacity applies even to a single blessing, for it is impossible to comprehend fully the properties of even the smallest favor -such as intellect, hearing, or sight- let alone the totality of blessings.

The singular form *niʿmah* denotes the genus, i.e., the totality of blessings, underscoring the impossibility of both qualitative enumeration (by type) and quantitative enumeration (by number). Thus, the statement "…*and if you count the blessings of Allah, you will never be able to count them*" means that even if you exert yourselves and exhaust all efforts, you will not succeed (al-Khāzin 1994, 3:71). In a subtle display of Qurʾānic eloquence, the singular *niʿmah* is used to signify both the genus and the plural: "*And if you count the kind of blessing -which encompasses all blessings- you will not be able to enumerate it*" (al-Qurṭubī 1964, 1:331). The implication is that if enumeration by type is impossible, then enumeration by each individual blessing is even more unattainable.

The verse therefore serves to remind man of his shortcoming before divine favours and to urge him to show gratitude to the utmost of his ability -not as full recompense, but as recognition of his incapacity, which itself constitutes a valid and accepted form of worship.

The Severity of the Threat and the Impossibility of Ransom from Punishment

The Qur'anic discourse on *waʿid (threat)* affirms the doctrine of the eternal nature of the Hereafter's punishment by stressing both the severity of the penalty and the impossibility of deliverance. In the verse:

"*And if those who did wrong (the polytheists and disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah), if they had all that is in the earth and therewith as much again* …" [Az-Zumar, 39:47],

a hypothetical scenario is depicted in which the wrongdoers possess twice the dominion of the world and offer it as ransom-yet it would not be accepted from them. This is reinforced by His saying:

"*Verily, those who disbelieved, and died while they were disbelievers, the (whole) earth full of gold will not be accepted from anyone of them even if they offered it as a ransom*" [Āl ʿImrān, 3:91],

demonstrating that no material wealth, however vast, can compensate for the forfeiture of faith. On that Day, no ransom will avail, and no escape will be possible except for those who turned in repentance and faith during their earthly life. Such passages underscore the magnitude of the required condition –faith- as the sole key to salvation, and the absolute futility of all substitutes. Accordingly, divine justice decrees that in the Hereafter neither financial wealth nor physical offering can substitute for the faith deliberately abandoned in this world, thereby sealing the destiny of the rejecters with an eternal recompense without reprieve.

Scholars of creed reflected on the wisdom of eternal punishment as an extension of the concept of infinity, linked to the permanence of its cause. Al-Ḥiṣnī (d. 829 AH) argued that the disbeliever's eternal stay in Hell results from his firmly settled resolve upon disbelief, such that even if his life were prolonged indefinitely, he would not change his stance—just as the believer's bliss is eternal because the motive of faith remains in his heart. This accords with the ḥadīth: "*The intention of the believer is better than his action*" (al-Ṭabarānī 2012, 6:185), meaning that the soundness of his intention extends for the entire length of his life (al-Ḥiṣnī n.d., 91).

In light of the above, the Qur'an's eloquence in portraying the infinite becomes evident: revelation's meanings never end, blessings cannot be counted, punishment cannot be ransomed away, and bliss never ceases. All of this serves to instill in humans an awareness of their limitations before the perfection of the Lord, and to inspire faith-driven conduct grounded in the recognition of man's need for divine guidance.

The Infinite Vastness of Allah's Mercy

The noble verses: *"… and My Mercy embraces all things"* [al-Aʿrāf, 7: 156] and *"Our Lord, You comprehend all things in mercy and knowledge"* [Ghāfir, 40: 7] indicate the comprehensiveness of Divine mercy and its extension to all existents without exception. Exegetes explained that this universality embraces all creation, even animals, and that none are excluded from it except by textual evidence—such that even Iblīs said, *"I am something,"* in hope that mercy might reach him. But Allah excluded him, saying: *"That (mercy) I shall ordain for those who are the Muttaqun"* [al-Aʿrāf: 156] (al-Qurṭubī 1964, 7:296), referring specifically to the mercy of the Hereafter. Mercy here is understood as an unlimited attribute, encompassing the worldly life for both believer and disbeliever, and reserved in the Hereafter for the Allah-fearing (Ibn Kathīr 2010, 4:94). This thus establishes the boundlessness of Divine mercy as another manifestation of infinity in Allah's perfect attributes.

CONCLUSION

A comprehensive examination of the concept of infinitude in Qur'anic discourse, supported by applied analysis that integrates rhetorical and rational approaches, makes it evident that these notions are not mere abstract terms. Rather, they form essential building

blocks in shaping the Qur'anic conception of Allah, the Hereafter, and legislation. The study shows that addressing such issues without considering rhetorical contexts and rational principles leads either to a flawed understanding of the text or to a deficient interpretation.

The findings highlight three main contributions. First, the study identifies six principal themes of infinitude in Allah's attributes: pre-eternity and everlastingness, comprehensiveness of knowledge, absoluteness of power, transcendence beyond limit and place, vastness of mercy, and the overall affirmation of negating limitation. Second, the Qur'an presents manifestations of infinitude across three principal dimensions: Allah's absolute attributes (such as eternality, power, and knowledge), the realities of the Hereafter (such as the eternity of Paradise and Hell and the vastness of bliss), and the discourse of obligation (emphasizing the greatness of divine words, the abundance of blessings, and the severity of warnings). Together, these establish a coherent doctrinal framework and nurture a faith-based consciousness attuned to divine perfection. Third, the study underscores the importance of integrating rhetorical and rational methodologies in understanding doctrinal verses: reliance on literal wording alone can result in anthropomorphism or contradiction, whereas combining rational interpretation with rhetorical analysis yields a harmonious understanding that safeguards transcendence while clarifying intended meaning.

Recommendations

To adopt an integrative exegetical methodology that employs rhetorical and linguistic tools alongside the insights of kalām and logic -particularly in verses concerning divine attributes and the unseen- in order to ensure precise and balanced interpretation and to safeguard against literalism and intellectual fallacies.

To give due consideration to textual, contextual, and rational indicators when dealing with absolute or infinite expressions, avoiding reliance on literal wording alone, thereby preventing perceived contradictions and maintaining harmony between reason and revelation.

To expand analytical research on the Qur'anic concept of infinitude, both in its foundational and inductive dimensions, and to conduct comparative studies between the methodologies of exegetes, philosophers, and theologians regarding eternity and perfection, thereby enriching exegetical and theological knowledge.

To incorporate the findings of this study and similar works into the curricula of Qur'anic exegesis and sciences in academic institutions, in order to promote a methodology integrating rational and textual interpretation, enabling students to attain a balanced understanding that resolves perceived contradictions and safeguards the Qur'anic text from claims of conflict with reason.

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