

Constructing Food Self-Sufficiency in Sacred Texts: A Cross-Faith Rhetorical and Balāghah Study

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Article History Received 17 May 2026 Revised 17 August 17 2026 Accepted 31 August 2026	Abstract What does food self-sufficiency mean in a multicultural society? More than production: access, distribution, social responsibility, and ecological sustainability all bear on it. This study asks how sacred texts from Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism construct food self-sufficiency rhetorically. Sixteen purposively selected textual units are analysed through a qualitative comparative approach, combining thematic mapping with rhetorical reading. <i>Balāghah</i> is applied to the Arabic corpus. Fairclough's three dimensions serve as an interpretive framework rather than as an analysis of independent policy data. The approach may offer an interpretive resource for interfaith dialogue and for culturally sensitive food-policy communication, provided religious narratives are read alongside empirical evidence and the circumstances of each tradition. Abstrak <i>Apa arti kemandirian pangan dalam masyarakat multikultural? Lebih dari sekadar produksi: akses, distribusi, tanggung jawab sosial, dan keberlanjutan ekologis semuanya berkaitan dengannya. Penelitian ini menanyakan bagaimana teks-teks suci Islam, Kristen, Hindu, Buddha, dan Konghucu mengonstruksi kemandirian pangan secara retorik. Enam belas unit teks yang dipilih secara purposif dianalisis melalui pendekatan kualitatif-komparatif, dengan menggabungkan pemetaan tematik dan pembacaan retorik. Balāghah diterapkan pada korpus berbahasa Arab. Tiga dimensi Fairclough berfungsi sebagai kerangka interpretatif, bukan sebagai analisis data kebijakan yang berdiri sendiri. Pendekatan ini dapat menjadi sumber interpretatif bagi dialog lintas iman dan komunikasi kebijakan pangan yang peka terhadap keragaman, dengan syarat narasi keagamaan dibaca bersama bukti empiris dan konteks masing-masing tradisi.</i> المخلص ما معنى الاكتفاء الذاتي الغذائي في مجتمع متعدد الثقافات؟ ليس الإنتاج وحده، بل الحصول على الغذاء وتوزيعه والمسؤولية الاجتماعية والاستدامة البيئية، وكلها أمور ترتبط به. وتبحث هذه الدراسة في كيفية بناء النصوص المقدسة من التقاليد الإسلامية والمسيحية والهندوسية والبوذية والكونفوشية معنى الاكتفاء الذاتي الغذائي بناءً بلاغياً. وقد حللت ست عشرة وحدة نصية اختيرت قصداً بمنهج نوعي مقارنة، يجمع بين التصنيف الموضوعي والقراءة الخطابية. وطبقت أدوات البلاغة العربية على النصوص العربية. ووظفت أبعاد فيركلاف الثلاثة إطاراً تفسيرياً لا تحليلاً لبيانات مستقلة عن السياسات. ويمكن أن يكون هذا النهج مورداً تفسيرياً للحوار بين الأديان وللتواصل بشأن سياسات الغذاء بما يراعى التنوع الديني، شريطة أن تقرأ الروايات الدينية إلى جانب الأدلة التجريبية وسياق كل تقليد.
Keywords: <i>Balāghah; cross-faith discourse; food self-sufficiency; rhetorical analysis; sacred texts</i>	
Cite this article: Hariyadi, S., & Budiman, M. (2026). Constructing food self-sufficiency in sacred texts: A cross-faith rhetorical and <i>balāghah</i> study. <i>Alsina : Journal of Arabic Studies</i> , 8(2), 292–303. https://doi.org/10.21580/alsina.8.2.32136	

Introduction

Indonesia's food self-sufficiency programme is usually read as a production target. That reading is too narrow. Availability, access, equitable distribution, and environmental sustainability belong to the same question, and food system transformation has to hold production, distribution, consumption, resource management, and socioeconomic access together rather than in sequence. Self-sufficiency, on this view, is not simply the volume a country grows for itself but an effort to keep food available and reachable while the ecological base of production survives (FAO, 2025).

Sacred texts carry values about basic needs, solidarity, resource management, and the human stance toward the environment, which is why they bear on a policy debate, and food sits in two places at once, in production and policy and inside a normative order that religious narratives help to build, so that in a society as plural as Indonesia reading across traditions matters, provided it proceeds without assuming that the traditions agree theologically (Vel et al., 2016).

Sacralisation of food policy names a discursive process: through religious language, symbols, and values, a food policy acquires moral or transcendent legitimacy and comes across as more than a technocratic choice. The concept comes out of work on sacralized politics, where religious claims lend sacred legitimacy to political goals and practices (Rouhana & Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2021), and applied here it tracks a movement from textual meaning toward legitimacy inside policy discourse, though the term claims no more than that, since food policies are not sacred in themselves and sacred legitimacy is only attributed to them, so that extending sacralized politics into food policy shows religious rhetoric doing two things at once, serving as an ethical resource and as a source of policy legitimacy.

Religion and food have been studied from several directions, and within Islam Q.S. Yūsuf 12:47–49 has been read through food security, covering production, storage, consumption, and famine preparedness, while *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* and Islamic philanthropy connect food to protecting life, to distribution, and to solidarity (Bahri et al., 2020; Farida & Munajat, 2025). Four further studies add specific findings, namely postharvest loss in food supply chains (Neisyafitri et al., 2026), the politics of zakat management between state and private bodies (Saidurrahman, 2013), a link between religiosity and sustainable food consumption (Habibi et al., 2024), and, outside Islam, food tied to religious environmentalism and public policy (Wijsen, 2025), while research on Arabic and the Qurʾan keeps returning to context as a condition of meaning, whether in syntagmatic–paradigmatic relations, in shifts in word usage between Qurʾanic passages, or in the relation between form and meaning (Agustin, 2020; Puspita & Yusup, 2023).

And yet this work tends to stay inside one tradition, one theme, or one analytical frame, and comparison of how the linguistic and rhetorical structures of sacred texts build meanings of food is rare, since few studies place five traditions side by side while also holding logos–ethos–pathos, the *maʿānī–bayān–badīʿ* framework, and the text–discursive practice–social practice link that Fairclough's CDA describes, and since Aristotelian appeals address persuasive functions that travel across traditions while *maʿānī*, *bayān*, and *badīʿ* name features specific to Arabic, equivalence would be a mistake and comparison has to register differences of language and theological setting.

Placed against one another, these perspectives may clarify how religious accounts of food persuade and where their use in policy discourse calls for restraint, a distinction that is not academic in a plural setting, since agreement about provision and responsibility can coexist with disagreement about the grounds on which either is claimed.

Method

A qualitative-comparative approach frames the study, which reads sacred texts from Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, and reflexivity here is not decoration, since training in Arabic,

balāghah, and the rhetoric of religious texts makes the Islamic corpus easier to handle and, for the same reason, introduces a risk of bias when reading across traditions, so *balāghah* categories were confined to the Islamic corpus rather than treated as universal, and cross-tradition comparison stayed with rhetorical functions and thematic constructions (Berger, 2015).

Comparing traditions invites oversimplification and the loss of context, so three safeguards were used, namely keeping each text inside its own setting, drawing on scholarship from the tradition concerned, and refraining from judgments about theological truth, even though whether specialists in each tradition would endorse these readings remains an open question, as does the matter of how communities actually receive the passages.

Selection was purposive, guided by relevance to food production and provision, distribution and solidarity, consumption and moderation, social responsibility, and human–nature relations, together with the presence of analysable rhetorical features (Leitch & Palmer, 2010), and sixteen units make up the corpus, eight from Islam, three from Christianity, two from Hinduism, two from Buddhism, and one from Confucianism, while incidental references, duplicated units, and secondary sources were left out and adequacy was assessed by analytical sufficiency and thematic coverage rather than by statistical representativeness.

The units of analysis are narratives, argumentative structures, diction, sentence forms, metaphor, simile, and other figurative language, and selection and analysis took place in Indonesia between January and July 2025 using scholarly databases and digital repositories, with Indonesia supplying the contemporary policy context while the religious corpus itself comes from elsewhere.

Qur'anic passages were read in the Arabic original (*Muṣḥaf al-Madīnah*, Ḥaṣṣ 'an 'Āṣim); hadīth in their Arabic text as recorded in *al-Adab al-Mufrad* and *al-Tirmidhī*, with English renderings by the authors; the Bible in the New Revised Standard Version; the *Bhagavad Gītā* in Sanskrit with an English translation; the *Dhammapada* in Pāli with an English translation as collated on SuttaCentral; and the *Lúnyǔ* in Chinese with reference to a standard English translation, and because *ma'ānī*, *bayān*, and *badī'* analysis applies only to Arabic, the comparison is asymmetric by construction, with non-Arabic texts read rhetorically while *balāghah* is reserved for the Islamic corpus, and since no specialist validated the readings, they stand as interpretive proposals open to correction.

Thematic mapping, rhetorical reading, and *balāghah* reading made up the analytical sequence, in which appeals are identified through logos, ethos, and pathos (Braet, 1992) while the *balāghah* reading identifies the *ma'ānī*, *bayān*, and *badī'* devices actually present (Fayyūd, 2004, 2008; 'Alī Aḥmad Musa, 1969), no one-to-one mapping being assumed since each device was read according to its contextual function. The readings were then set within Fairclough's three dimensions of text, discursive practice, and social practice (Fairclough, 1992; Wodak & Meyer, 2001), and because no independent policy data were collected, the three dimensions work as an interpretive frame rather than as a method applied to a separate policy corpus (Fairclough, 2013; Leitch & Palmer, 2010), in much the same way food-policy research has used them (Maughan et al., 2020).

Every unit went through the same protocol, with ethos, logos, and pathos serving as cross-tradition categories while *ma'ānī*, *bayān*, and *badī'* were kept for the Islamic texts, and the six strategies were not fixed in advance but emerged from the analysis, so that adequacy rested on thematic diversity and analytical sufficiency rather than on how well each tradition was represented.

Results

Several thematic dimensions recurred in the initial reading: food provision and storage; moderation in consumption and the avoidance of waste; distribution and solidarity; social responsibility; and the relation of food to human life and to natural or cosmic order. Table 1 sets out the thematic mapping together with the passages on which the rhetorical and *balāghah* analyses later draw.

Table 1 The Religious Text Corpus on Food

Religion	Textual Source
Islam	The Qur'an: Q.S. Yūsuf 12:47–49; al-A'rāf 7:31; al-Isrā' 17:26–27; al-Insān 76:8–9; Hūd 11:61. Selected Hadīth: solidarity with neighbors (<i>Al-Adab al-Mufrad</i> , no. 112); moderation in eating and consumption control (al-Tirmidhī, no. 2380); and the command to plant before the Day of Judgment (<i>Al-Adab al-Mufrad</i> , no. 479)
Christianity	The Bible: Matthew 6:11; Genesis 41:47–57; Genesis 2:15
Hinduism	<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i> 3:14–15; <i>Mahābhārata</i> , <i>Śānti Parva</i> , Section CXLI
Buddhism	The Tipiṭaka: <i>Dhammapada</i> 177; <i>Aṅguttara Nikāya</i> 3.16
Confucianism	<i>Lúnyǔ</i> (Analects) 12:7

Four interconnected orientations emerge from Table 1: sufficiency and resilience; management and moderation; distribution and solidarity; and human relations with social and ecological order. Christianity's daily bread belongs to the first, as do food planning and storage in the story of Yūsuf and the link between sufficiency and governance in the Confucian corpus, while the second appears in the Islamic prohibition of *isrāf* and *tabdhīr* and in the Buddhist emphasis on restraint. Under the third come the food given to vulnerable groups in Q.S. al-Insān 76:8–9, Hindu *anna-dāna*, and Buddhist *dāna*, and the fourth gathers Christian stewardship, Hindu cosmic interconnectedness, and the Confucian tie between people's welfare and governmental responsibility, so that the traditions converge on sufficiency, management, solidarity, and sustainability while differing in the normative foundation beneath each; Table 1 lists all 16 units, and every one is analysed in the Discussion.

Table 1 shows what the texts say about food, not yet how they make it persuasive, so the analysis shifts from thematic to rhetorical construction and asks how linguistic choices, argumentative structures, and *balāghah* devices generate persuasive force, with logos, ethos, and pathos read alongside *ma'ānī*, *bayān*, and *badī'*, while Table 2 gathers the strategies that emerge, together with the devices carrying each, and Table 3 sets out the alignment and divergence between the two frameworks unit by unit.

Six rhetorical strategies are identified in Table 2, each paired with its Aristotelian appeals, its *balāghah* devices, and the texts that illustrate it, and together they give a comparative view of how food-related themes are made persuasive across the traditions selected.

Table 2 Rhetorical and *Balāghah* Construction of Food-Related Themes

Strategies	Rhetorical	Balāghah	Source
Food Sacralization	Ethos and Logos	<i>Ma'ānī</i> : <i>qaṣr</i> إنمّا; <i>Bayān</i> : depiction of sacrifice على حبه	Q.S. al-Insān 76:8–9; Matthew 6:11; <i>Bhagavad Gītā</i> 3:14–15
Crisis and Anticipatory Planning	Logos and Pathos	<i>Ma'ānī</i> : temporal structure with ثم, <i>fi'l māḍī/muḍārī</i> 'amr; <i>Bayān</i> : <i>taṣwīr</i> , famine years that “devour” (يأكلن) stored grain	Q.S. Yūsuf 12:47–49; Genesis 41:47–57; <i>Mahābhārata</i> , <i>Śānti Parva</i> , CXLI
Collective Responsibility and Solidarity	Ethos and Pathos	<i>Ma'ānī</i> : negative <i>kalām khabarī</i> (ليس); <i>Badī'</i> : <i>ṭibāq</i>	Q.S. al-Insān 76:8–9; <i>al-Adab al-Mufrad</i> 112; <i>Dhammapada</i> 177; <i>Lúnyǔ</i> 12:7
Justice and Distribution Ethics	Pathos and Ethos	<i>Ma'ānī</i> : <i>amr</i> ; <i>Badī'</i> : <i>muqābalah</i> , rights vs <i>tabdhīr</i>	Q.S. al-Isrā' 17:26–27; <i>Dhammapada</i> 177; <i>Lúnyǔ</i> 12:7
Asceticism and Consumption Restraint	Ethos and Logos	<i>Ma'ānī</i> : <i>amr</i> كلوا واشربوا and <i>nahy</i> لا تسرفوا; <i>Bayān</i> : <i>taṣwīr</i> , the stomach as a vessel (وعاء)	Q.S. al-A'rāf 7:31; al-Tirmidhī 2380; <i>Aṅguttara Nikāya</i> 3.16

Strategies	Rhetorical	Balāghah	Source
Cosmic-Ecological Responsibility	Ethos and Logos	<i>Ma‘ānī: kalām khabarī</i> (Q.S. Hūd 11:61), protasis–apodosis (<i>al-Adab al-Mufrad</i> 479); <i>Badī‘</i> : connector ف and ثم	Q.S. Hūd 11:61; <i>al-Adab al-Mufrad</i> 479; Genesis 2:15; <i>Bhagavad Gītā</i> 3:14–15

The six strategies bring particular appeals together with specific linguistic and rhetorical resources, as Table 2 shows, and that table also names the textual sources illustrating each strategy, while how the frameworks relate to one another is treated more closely in Table 3, which compares textual units, the appeals identified in them, the relevant *balāghah* features, and the relation between the two.

Table 3 Alignment and divergence between Aristotelian appeals and *balāghah* devices

Textual unit	Aristotelian appeal	<i>Ma‘ānī</i>	<i>Bayān / Badī‘</i>	Relation
Q.S. al-Insān 76:8–9	Ethos, logos	<i>qaṣr (innamā)</i>	Depiction of giving <i>‘alā ḥubbihi</i>	Convergent: <i>qaṣr</i> restricts the motive to God, which performs the ethos function
Matthew 6:11	Ethos, logos	n.a.	n.a.	Divergent: appeal present without a marked <i>balāghah</i> device (non-Arabic text)
Q.S. Yūsuf 12:47–49	Logos, pathos	Temporal structure with <i>thumma; fi l māḍī/muḍāri‘/amr</i>	<i>Isti‘ārah</i> -like <i>taṣwīr</i> in <i>ya‘kulna</i>	Convergent: the sequence enacts what logos names
Genesis 41:47–57	Logos, pathos	n.a.	n.a.	Convergent at the level of appeal only; no Arabic device applies
Q.S. al-Insān 76:8–9; <i>al-Adab al-Mufrad</i> 112	Ethos, pathos	<i>Kalām khabarī</i> negation with <i>laysa</i>	<i>Ṭibāq</i> (<i>yashba‘u / jā‘i</i>)	Partial: <i>ṭibāq</i> reinforces pathos, but the negation of identity carries the ethos claim
Q.S. al-Isrā‘ 17:26–27	Pathos, ethos	<i>Amr (āti)</i>	<i>Muqābalah</i> between granting rights and prohibiting <i>tabdhīr</i>	Convergent: <i>muqābalah</i> structures the moral contrast that pathos mobilizes
Q.S. al-A‘rāf 7:31; <i>al-Tirmidhī</i> 2380	Ethos, logos	<i>Amr (kulū, ishrabū)</i> and <i>nahy (lā tusrifū)</i>	<i>Taṣwīr</i> of the stomach as a vessel (<i>wi‘ā</i>)	Convergent: the normative boundary set by <i>amr/nahy</i> is concretized by <i>taṣwīr</i>
Q.S. Hūd 11:61; <i>al-Adab al-Mufrad</i> 479	Ethos, logos	<i>Kalām khabarī</i> ; conditional structure (<i>sharṭ</i>)	<i>Majāz mursal</i> (<i>ba‘diyyah</i>); <i>fa–thumma</i> sequence	Convergent on ethos, divergent on mechanism: the conditional adds unnamed force

Each textual unit in Table 3 appears with its co-occurring Aristotelian appeal and *balāghah* device, and the table records whether the two converge or diverge, equivalence being not what the study proposes since the frameworks are complementary, often reinforcing the same persuasive function and also parting company, because ethos, logos, and pathos describe the direction of persuasion while *ma‘ānī*, *bayān*, and *badī‘* describe the mechanism producing it. Some units carry a device such as *qaṣr* or *ṭibāq* with no single Aristotelian counterpart, and others carry an appeal with no marked device, so that asymmetry, rather than a one-to-one mapping, is the relationship argued for here.

Discussion

Six strategies emerge from the analysis, and each is treated below by tracing the textual construction first and then the persuasive work done by the Aristotelian appeals and, where the material is Arabic, by the *balāghah* devices, since across the traditions the strategies are not identical in form, but what they share is a way of tying food to material need, to moral obligation, and to the continuity of life.

Table 1 answers the first research question, since food in the five traditions clusters into four orientations, namely sufficiency and resilience, management and moderation, distribution and solidarity, and ecological order, from which six strategies follow, and the second question concerns persuasion, where ethos, logos, and pathos carry most of the weight while *ma'ānī*, *bayān*, and *badī'* reinforce them in the eight Islamic units, so the frameworks are complementary rather than equivalent, one naming the direction of persuasion and the other naming the linguistic mechanism.

Food sacralization: Food as a theological and cosmic reality

In the Islamic corpus the clearest instance is Q.S. al-Insān 76:8–9, where the act of feeding is tied directly to the divine face, so that the verse already carries the theological claim the section develops:

"وَيُطْعَمُونَ عَلَىٰ حَيْثُ مَسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا ﴿٨﴾ إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكُورًا"

Sacralization of food lifts it out of biological necessity and invests it with theological and moral value, so that feeding the poor, the orphan, and the captive becomes an act directed at God and food serves devotion and solidarity rather than physical need alone (Ibn 'Āshūr, 2000), and three recent studies point the same way, namely the semantics of *rizq* and provision in the Qur'an (Al-Balushi, 2023), distribution as social responsibility (Firdausy & Syamhadi, 2023), and a comparative rhetorical reading of *rizq* vocabulary (Bayer & Hacımüftüoğlu, 2023).

Christian and Hindu material carries the pattern further, since in Matthew 6:11 the prayer for daily bread places food inside dependence on divine provision (Barnes, 2022) while *Bhagavad Gītā* 3:14–15 ties food to rain, sacrifice, and human action within a cosmic order (Pustikayasa et al., 2025), and within the Aristotelian appeals the two passages divide the work, sincerity becoming an ideal of character in the Qur'anic passage, where the givers declare that they seek neither reward nor thanks and the act of giving gains moral credibility from that very declaration, while the *Gītā* passage argues by causal reasoning as it traces the continuity of life back to sacrifice and rain (Aristotle, 1991; Braet, 1992). Arabic carries this in *balāghah* through *qaṣr*, since the particle *innamā* in "إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ" restricts the motive of giving to its divine object (Fayyūd, 2008; Siregar et al., 2024), foregrounding purpose instead of adding information (Abu Quba & Al Qatawna, 2024), and sacrifice is rendered concrete by the phrase "عَلَىٰ حَيْثُ" where the food given remains dear to the giver (Ibn 'Āshūr, 2000), so that no *badī'* device has to be claimed, *qaṣr* and the depiction of giving already carrying the argument.

Where food policy is framed in sacred language, particular preferences can be legitimised and a position becomes hard to contest once religious legitimacy attaches to it (Rouhana & Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2021), such discourse naturalising ideology by presenting a construction as common sense (Fairclough, 2013) while religious authority narrows the room for dissent (Goldzwig, 1987) even as it strengthens the policy's legitimacy in a plural society (Syahbudi, 2025), so the risk is not hypothetical, since Indonesia's self-sufficiency language can shore up state authority rather than the food security of the vulnerable (Neilson & Wright, 2017), and religiosity predicts sustainable consumption only in collectivist, long-term-oriented cultures (Kaplan & Iyer, 2021), which makes sacred texts an unreliable universal policy resource.

Crisis and anticipatory planning

Scarcity, in the second strategy, is something to be foreseen during plenty, and Q.S. Yūsuf 12:47–49 gives the clearest form of it, seven years of planting and storage, then seven lean years, then recovery, a sequence running from production through storage and crisis to recovery (Bahri et al., 2020), while Genesis 41:47–57 runs parallel, Joseph turning a warning into the collection of grain (Shogunle, 2019; Widder, 2014), and the *Mahābhārata* (*Śānti Parva*, CXLI) dwells on drought and famine as a warning about how fragile social order is (Ganguli, 1883), so logos and pathos dominate across these texts, reasoning being plain in the link drawn between present abundance and a later capacity to withstand famine while feeling enters through the "seven difficult years" and comparable images of drought (Demirdöğen, 2016). Arabic sharpens this through *balāghah*, the repeated *thumma*, "then, after that, there will come," ordering the events chronologically as the

verb series cultivate, harvest, store, and secure ties prediction to action (Fayyūd, 2008), while the famine years that “devour” what was stored are best described as figurative representation, or personification (*taṣwīr*), rather than as a particular type of majāz (Fayyūd, 2004).

Collective responsibility: From private rights to social obligations

The Islamic example is the following hadith of the Prophet:

لَيْسَ الْمُؤْمِنُ الَّذِي يَشْبَعُ وَجَارُهُ جَائِعٌ

A private need becomes an obligation toward others in the third strategy, since the hadith recorded in *Al-Adab al-Mufrad* (no. 112) makes a neighbour’s hunger the measure of a believer’s sufficiency, so that the right to food brings a duty with it, and Hindu *anna-dāna* binds the giving of food to dharma in a comparable way (Raju et al., 2024), while *Lúnyǔ* 12:7 links provision to governance.

The hadith is carried by ethos and pathos, since hunger next to the well-fed becomes a question about the quality of faith through the identity “المؤمن” “the believer,” and the contrast between “يَشْبَعُ” “satiated,” and “جَائِعٌ” “hungry,” makes inequality concrete instead of statistical (Aristotle, 1991; Braet, 1992), and Confucian material moves the same ethos to the ruler, who must secure food, defence, and the people’s trust, since trust once lost dissolves the order that provision sustains. In *ma‘ānī*, the negative *kalām khabarī* “لَيْسَ الْمُؤْمِنُ الَّذِي...” withholds the attribution of faith rather than issuing a command (M. A. Musa, 2006), and in *badī* the pairing of satiation and hunger works as *ṭibāq* (‘Alī Aḥmad Musa, 1969), so that no *bayān* device has to be claimed.

Justice and inequality: Managing the threat of famine

The fourth strategy is prominent in Q.S. al-Isrā’ 17:26–27:

وَأَتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَلَا تُبَذِّرْ تَبْذِيرًا ۚ إِنَّ الْمُبْذِرِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيَاطِينِ وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِرَبِّهِ كَفُورًا

Distribution and rights are the frame here, since the verse obliges the giving of relatives, the poor, and the traveller their due and prohibits waste, which ties sufficiency to the needs of others (Firdausy & Syamhadi, 2023; Fitriani, 2023; Ibn ‘Āshūr, 2000), a parallel being set by *Dhammapada* 177, in which misers do not reach the celestial realms and the wise rejoice in giving (Ardiansyah, 2023).

One qualification is needed, since ethical and religious norms operate inside structural limits: Thow et al. (2019) show that trade rules have narrowed Indonesia’s food-security policy space, so norms on their own cannot deliver equitable distribution.

Pathos leads here, with ethos reinforcing it, since attention is directed to those in need through the vulnerable figures *al-miskīn* and *ibn al-sabīl* while fulfilling rights is set against wasting resources, the latter charged by the label “brothers of the devils” (Aristotle, 1991; Braet, 1992). Distribution is made explicit by the imperative “آتِ” “give,” while “حَقَّهُ” “his due,” grounds it in entitlement rather than charity, so the command binds under *zakāt* and guides under voluntary *ṣadaqah* (Puspita & Yusup, 2023), and two directions for managing resources are set by the shift from *amr* to *nahy*, the moral opposition between granting rights and *tabdhīr* being best read as *taṣwīr* that intensifies condemnation rather than as a specific *tashbīh* or *isti‘ārah* (Fayyūd, 2004, 2008; ‘Alī Aḥmad Musa, 1969).

Asceticism and self-control: Regulating the desire for consumption

In the Islamic corpus the principle appears in Q.S. al-A‘rāf 7:31:

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا ۚ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ

It is reinforced by a hadith of the Prophet:

مَا مَلَأَ ابْنُ آدَمَ وَعَاءً شَرًّا مِنْ بَطْنِهِ، حَسْبُ ابْنِ آدَمَ أَكَلَاتُ يُقِمِّنَ صُلْبَهُ، فَإِنْ كَانَ لَا مَحَالَةَ فَتُلْتُ لِبَطْنِهِ وَتُلْتُ لِشَرَابِهِ وَتُلْتُ لِنَفْسِهِ

Consumption is regulated rather than rejected in the fifth strategy, since eating and drinking are permitted in the verse while excess is not, and the stomach hadith applies the same principle, measuring sufficiency in a few morsels and, when more is needed, dividing the stomach into thirds (Ibn 'Āshūr, 2000), with Buddhism's *bhojane mattaññutā* expressing a comparable middle way in which eating sustains the body rather than pleasing it (Ardiansyah, 2023; SuttaCentral, 2016).

Ethos dominates, and pathos supports it, since the ideal figure keeps appetite within limits and emotional judgement is carried by the image of the stomach as a "vessel" that becomes the worst of vessels (Aristotle, 1991; Braet, 1992). In Arabic, permission comes first and a limit follows, through the paired *amr* "كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا" and *nahy* "وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا", and the closing "إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ" turns a rule into a moral evaluation (Fayyūd, 2008), repetition of the root s-r-f in "do not be excessive" and "the wasteful" forming a *jinās ishtiqaq* ('Alī Aḥmad Musa, 1969) and the hadith's vessel image, read through *bayān*, making greed visible in concrete form (Fayyūd, 2004; Kurnia et al., 2022). Caution applies once more here, since Burges Watson et al. (2021) warn that casting consumption as individual "choice" shifts responsibility onto consumers while structural drivers stay untouched, a risk that bears on appeals to self-restraint (Petrescu-Mag et al., 2019).

Cosmic-ecological rhetoric: Food and the harmony of nature

Food and production are tied to responsibility for sustaining life in the sixth strategy, since human beings appear as the earth's cultivators in Q.S. Hūd 11:61: "... هُوَ أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَاسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا ...", read as *isti 'mār al-ard* and analysed in work on Qur'anic ecotheology (Blankinship et al., 2025; Ibn 'Āshūr, 2000), and a hadith extends it: "إِنْ قَامَتِ السَّاعَةُ وَفِي يَدٍ أَحَدِكُمْ فَسِيلَةٌ، فَإِنْ اسْتَطَاعَ أَنْ لَا تَقُومَ حَتَّى يَغْرِسَهَا فَلْيَغْرِسْهَا" that is, even if the Hour should rise while a seedling is in one's hand, one should still plant it. A Hindu parallel is supplied by the Gītā's chain from action to sacrifice, rain, food, and life ("*annād bhavanti bhūtāni parjanyaḥ annasambhavaḥ; yajñād bhavati parjanya yajñaḥ karmasamudbhavaḥ*"), and a Christian one by Genesis 2:15, where Waas (2026), reading *'abad* and *shamar*, treats the garden mandate as an ethic of stewardship and ecological responsibility rather than agricultural instruction alone.

Ethos and logos do the persuasive work here, since the human figure is constructed as responsible for the earth through the mandate to cultivate and the planting hadith stretches that figure to action whose benefit the actor may never see (Aristotle, 1991; Braet, 1992), while the Gītā, by contrast, persuades through reasoning about how life is interconnected. In the Arabic, human origin from the earth is paired with an ecological function in the *kalām khabarī*, and the *fa-thumma* sequence connects this mandate to forgiveness and repentance, keeping the relation to the earth joined to the relation to God (Fayyūd, 2008), the image of the Day of Judgment with a seedling in hand being best read as a *majāz mursal* of part for whole (Fayyūd, 2004).

Taken together, the six strategies point to food self-sufficiency as a normative order rather than a technical capacity, one in which provision, restraint, distribution, and ecological care entail one another, and function is where the traditions converge, since each sacralises food, regulates its use, and binds it to social obligation. Their normative foundations diverge, however, since divine command and prophetic example ground the Islamic texts, stewardship and dependence on provision the Christian, cosmic reciprocity and *dāna* the Hindu, the middle way and merit the Buddhist, and the trust that sustains governance the Confucian, and given an illustrative rather than exhaustive corpus the pattern should be read with caution, though it does appear to bear on the study's central claim that rhetorical and *balāghah* analysis describe complementary rather than identical aspects of persuasion.

Three implications follow, in that shared values of solidarity, justice, moderation, and ecological responsibility give interfaith dialogue common ground without requiring that theological difference disappear, and in food-policy communication religious narratives can motivate and legitimate but cannot stand in for empirical evidence, distributive considerations, economic feasibility, or environmental assessment, so that

treating them as an ethical resource, with deliberation left open, serves both policy actors and religious organizations better.

Conclusion

One insight runs through these texts, since appeals to food self-sufficiency link provision to obligations toward others and to the conditions that sustain life, and that link persuades in different ways across traditions, shared concerns not making their theological grounds interchangeable, so reading Aristotelian appeals alongside, but not as equivalents of, Arabic *balāghah* makes the differences visible and cautions against presenting religious language as a ready-made justification for food policy.

A purposive corpus of 16 units, unevenly distributed, cannot represent the theological diversity of five traditions, Confucianism in particular resting on a single passage, and no policy, media, or institutional corpus was analysed, which leaves Fairclough's discursive- and social-practice dimensions interpretive rather than independently evidenced, while readings were not checked by specialists in each tradition, translations limit cross-language comparison, and *balāghah* applies only to the Arabic texts, so these constraints restrict claims about religious reception or policy effects.

Further research should balance the number of textual units across traditions, check source-language readings with specialists, and examine how particular communities understand the passages in practice, while a separate corpus of policy, media, or institutional texts would allow the proposed link between sacred-text rhetoric and food-policy discourse to be tested rather than inferred. Until then, the present reading is most useful as a qualified basis for comparison, not as evidence of policy effects or consensus among believers.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to the Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM) of Universitas Islam Sultan Agung, Semarang, Indonesia, for its continued encouragement and support in promoting research publications and fostering academic collaboration. The institution's commitment to encouraging scholarly engagement has been instrumental in motivating the author to disseminate research findings through academic publications and to establish collaborations with researchers from other universities whose expertise aligns with the author's research interests.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare in relation to this article.

Declaration of AI Use

The author used ChatGPT Go to assist in the preparation of this manuscript. The tool was used to improve grammar, spelling, punctuation, and readability; refine academic writing style and clarity; assist with translation; organize ideas and improve the structure of the manuscript; and identify potential research gaps, questions, and directions for further scholarly consideration. The use of AI was limited to supporting the writing and refinement process and did not replace the author's intellectual contribution, critical thinking, scholarly judgment, or responsibility for the research. All AI-assisted outputs were carefully reviewed, edited, and verified by the author. The author takes full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, originality, and final content of the manuscript.

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