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**Persuasive Strategies in Religious Discourse: A Pragmatic Analysis of  
Engineer Muhammad Ali Mirza's Lectures**



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**Abstract**

The religious discourse is a critical tool of persuasion, as the beliefs are shaped and the authority is built. Amidst the emergence of digital preaching, rhetoric approaches have taken a new form in new communicative settings. Engineer Muhammad Ali Mirza in Pakistan has become well known in his rational and reformist lectures which prompts an enquiry into the linguistic processes involved in his persuasive appeal. This study seeks to establish the key pragmatic measures used by Engineer Mirza in his religious talks and discusses how the pragmatic measures create authority and credibility in his lectures. Based on the Rhetorical Theory of Aristotle, this qualitative study uses reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019) on chosen lectures in Urdu language on YouTube. The themes considered in the analysis are the themes on ethos, logos and pathos in the lectures of Mirza. The findings indicate that the persuasion of Mirza is based on the use of rational argumentation (logos), moral integrity (ethos) and moderate emotional appeal (pathos) which allows his presentation of intellectual credibility and spiritual authenticity. The study emphasizes the fact that Aristotelian appeals are still useful in online religious, which complements the knowledge on persuasive pragmatics in contemporary Islamic communication.

**Keywords:** Persuasive Strategies, Religious Discourse, Pragmatic Analysis, Engineer Muhammad Ali Mirza's

**Introduction**

The language is one of the main tools that beliefs, values and ideologies are formed and maintained. Persuasive discourse is also important in terms of the religious sphere as it helps to spread the doctrines, and it is used to create authority, to influence the moral conduct and to enhance the communal identity. The history of studying persuasion can be traced to the Rhetorical Theory of Aristotle, who identified ethos (credibility), logos (reasoning), and pathos (emotional appeal) as the three foundations of persuasion (Aristotle, 2007). These ideas remain applicable to the discussion of religious lecture, in which speakers can appeal to both reason and emotion to appeal to their followers (Garver, 2018).

The preaching has gone beyond the traditional parameters with the emergence of the digital media. Watching online videos like YouTube has emerged as a new platform of religious engagements (Campbell, 2010). Engineer Muhammad Ali Mirza has become one of the most popular digital religious scholars in Pakistan whose talks focus on rationality and scriptural arguments. The success of his persuasion begs the question concerning the role of linguistic and pragmatic strategies in determining authority and credibility in his religious talk. In spite of his influence, the linguistic and rhetorical processes of the persuasive communication of Mirza have been researched very little. The literature on Islamic preaching in question focuses mainly on either theological content or ideological influence (Pihlaja, 2021; Van Dijk, 2016) instead of considering the practical application of persuasion. This creates a knowledge gap in the way Mirza forms persuasive power using language in the digital religious setting.

The existing research on sermon rhetoric, particularly in Christian and Western

culture represents how preachers can strike a balance between logic and emotion in order to reach audiences (Holičková, 2019; Hutchings, 2015). Nevertheless, the literature on South Asian Muslim preachers is few especially when it comes to the overlap of Aristotelian rhetoric and pragmatic thematic analysis. This study bridges this gap as it looks at the linguistic expression of ethos, logos, and pathos in the Urdu lectures intended by Mirza. Based on the Rhetorical Theory of Aristotle, the research explores the way in which ethos, logos, and pathos apply to help achieve persuasive communication in religion (Aristotle, 2007; Garver, 2018). This model makes it possible to explore the issue of the relationship between moral credibility, logical reasoning and emotional appeal in a practical way. The research has theoretical and methodological importance. It proves the relevance of the framework outlined by Aristotle in the analysis of twenty-first-century digital sermons and combines it with the thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019) in order to reveal the hidden persuasive tactics. In practice, it helps to comprehend how online Islamic academics can establish credibility and authority among multi-cultural audiences and contributes to the further development of religious communication, pragmatics, and digital rhetoric research.

**Research Objective:**

To identify the major pragmatic strategies employed by Engineer Muhammad Ali mirza in his religious lectures.

To explore how Engineer Muhammad Ali Mirza uses pragmatic strategies to construct authority and credibility in his religious discourse.

**Research Questions:**

What major pragmatic strategies are employed by Engineer Muhammad Ali mirza in his religious lectures?

How does Engineer Muhammad Ali Mirza use pragmatic strategies to construct authority and credibility in his religious discourse?

**Literature Review**

There has been long interdisciplinary interest in the study of persuasion in religious discourse since religious lectures mobilizes belief, identity, and practice. The classical rhetorical theory, particularly, the three-part model of ethos, logos and pathos developed by Aristotle is still instrumental in the analysis of the credibility establishment, the reasons marshaling and the appeal to the emotions of speakers (Aristotle, 2007). In modern scholarship, Aristotle does not emerge as an antique artifact but as a vibrant analytic language of the examination of the contemporary religious communicative practices (Garver, 2018; Jörke, 2014). Four interconnected threads in this literature review underlie the current study: (1) the relevance of Aristotelian appeals to religious rhetoric remains; (2) religious rhetoric and sermons as the subject of current rhetorical and discourse-analytic studies; (3) the decline of religious authority and advocacy in digital media; and (4) the role of evidence in persuasive discourse in religious talk.

**Aristotle and the Modern Rhetoric**

According to Aristotle, the three tools of rhetoric known as ethos, logos and pathos offer a concise but an effective framework with which to analyze the persuasive

appeals of the religious lectures. Ethos is about the perceived dignity and credibility of the speaker; logos is the index of the reasoning and textual justification, pathos is the care of the emotional stimulation and audience identification (Aristotle, 2007). Contemporary theorists have demonstrated that the appeals of Aristotle work in practice in a sympathetic relationship and that the mutual interaction of the appeals offers more interpretative value than does a focus on any one mode individually (Garver, 2018). Jorgen (2014) emphasizes the fact that deliberative and ethical aspects of Aristotelian rhetoric could be applied analytically well when exploring modern-day discourse of the population. Problematic of the mere ethos/logos/pathos triad have been rhetorical scholars, looking to pay attention to cultural, ideological and institutional limitations to convincing possibilities (DePalma et al., 2023).

### **The Rhetoric, Religion and Discourse Analysis**

In addition to classical rhetoric, discourse-analytic methods serve as supplementary and expansive to rhetorical readings with respect to language-in-use, intertextuality and sociocognitive processes (Fairclough, 2010; Van Dijk, 2016). CDA exposes the way religious texts and sermons reproduce, challenge or affirm social orders (Fairclough, 2010). The sociocognitive approach of Van Dijk, e.g. predicts the ways of persuasive practices and ideological reproduction based on knowledge structure and mental model (Van Dijk, 2016). More recent edited books of religious discourse (Pihlaja, 2021) compile methods, especially interaction analysis, narrative analysis, multimodal approaches which are especially suitable to sermon studies, institutional preaching and mediated religious communication. Such strategies emphasize that rhetorical appeals are to be placed in context: ethos is not just the personal character, but a discursively created identity; logos is not just formal argument but intertextual argument in the form of appeals to scripture and tradition; pathos is frequently mediated in terms of ritual or story or community memory.

### **Online Religion and New Forms of Power**

The digital turn has altered the nature of the generation, distribution and opposition of religious authority. Religious news media studies indicate that digital platforms restructure access to content, knowledge and networks- thus remaking what has been available to elicit persuasion (Campbell, 2010; Campbell, 2012). Writing In classical authority hierarchies, Hutchings (2014/2015) and the later literature suggest that the use of apps, social media and video platforms transforms the classical authority hierarchies: by providing direct-to-audience communication and by prioritizing visibility and responsiveness as quality indicators. Most recent edited studies on digital religion bring together the negotiation of ritual, identity and authority in online space (Campbell and Tsuria, 2021). In this regard, video platforms, including YouTube are transformed into a virtual pulpit, executives combine scriptural argumentation with performance presence, production aesthetics and interactivity to create persuasive momentum (Hutchings, 2015). The implication is that the ethos in the digital era is based on discursive integrity and mediated presence (accessibility, transparency, production values) whereas, logos and pathos tend to be presented in a multimodal way (visuals, prosody, editing).

### **Experimental Research of Persuasive Techniques in Sermons and Religious Lecture**

The focus on the centrality of Aristotelian appeals is confirmed by empirical research of sermon rhetoric, which is also recording genre-specific strategies. Systematic applications of intertextuality, narrative exemplification, speech acts (interrogatives, imperatives), and figurative language as methods of persuasion are contrastive and corpus-based analyses of sermons (Holíčková, 2019, 2024). The comparative analysis of catholic and Protestant sermons by Holicackova, e.g., can show how intertextual citation and personal testimony work differently in the traditions but end up in ethos/logos/pathos situations. The analysis of Islamic preaching in modern media environments suggests equally that this involves a hybrid rhetorical logic: a high degree of orientation towards scriptural authority (logos based on the exegesis of Quranic/hadith texts), and identity management and boundary-drawing (ethos), as well as a selective use of emotional appeals aimed at creating piety and community (pathos).

Although, the above described literature is rich, there are gaps. To begin with, a great deal of research either favors classical descriptions of rhetoric ( ethos/logos/pathos) without their thematic processes, or it utilizes thematic/CDA approaches without theorizing persuasion in Aristotelian terms. Another issue is that the literature on digital religious authority is disproportionately Christian and on Western platforms; less is said about a comparative analysis of South Asian Muslim preachers in digital ecologies. Lastly, the empirical research on sermons frequently uses the views of single techniques; the interpretive designs mixed with the Aristotelian theory and the reflexive thematic analysis are rather uncommon. This study fills these gaps by synthesizing Aristotelian rhetoric and reflexive thematic analysis of Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019) to consider the thematic implementation of ethos, logos and pathos in the lectures of the Engineer Muhammad Ali Mirza. The study, through placing an analysis of a, digitally mediated preacher in the context of a study of rhetoric, discourse and digital religion contributes both in terms of its methodological approach, i.e. the integrated theory-method approach, and its substantive contribution by documenting persuasive practices in an Islamic digital context today.

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

This study is qualitative research in the paradigm of discourse analysis, specifically with references to pragmatic and rhetorical dimensions of a religious lecture. The objective is to understand the persuasive technique applied by Engineer Muhammad Ali Mirza in his religious lectures in the analytical perspective of Rhetorical Theory of Aristotle (ethos, logos, and pathos). Qualitative approach was selected as the most suitable one since it enables the profound interpretative knowledge of linguistic and rhetorical patterns in the naturally occurring discourse (Creswell and Poth, 2018). This is an interpretive and exploratory study as opposed to hypothesis-driven study. The study aims at revealing the linguistic and pragmatic composition of persuasion in the lectures of Mirza to make himself more authoritative and credible. This type of exploration is consistent with the interpretivist philosophy which is focused on meaning-making, context, and construction of knowledge socially (Silverman, 2021).

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## **Data Collection**

The data includes twelve transcribed lectures of the Engineer Muhammad Ali Mirza, delivered between 2020 and 2024 on his official YouTube channel, Engineer Muhammad Ali Mirza Official. Purposive sampling was applied to select these lectures, as it is a qualitative research method that is adequate to conduct a discourse (Palinkas et al., 2015).

## **The inclusion criteria were:**

Lectures where Mirza speaks about interpretive, reformist religious issues and polemical issues

Lectures of more than fifteen minutes to be sure of richness of data

Urdu language discourses with little code-switching in English or Arabic.

All the lectures were recorded word to word and pauses, repetitions and self-corrections were retained to keep pragmatic characteristics. The electronic transcripts were kept digitally and coded by hand. Ethics were closely followed; since there is no personal information and private or personal information was not used, Mirza is a publicly available source. Nevertheless, the integrity and transparency were preserved by keeping credit of the authorship of the speaker (Flick, 2023).

## **Analytical Framework**

The research uses the Rhetorical Theory proposed by Aristotle as its framework of thorough study, which views of persuasion through three appeals (ethos (credibility), logos (reasoning), and pathos (emotion) (Aristotle, 2007). These were operationalized into thematic codes that were used to identify the pragmatic strategies in the lecture of Mirza. For instance: Codes that fell under ethos encompassed mention of honesty, lack of sectarianism and assertions of genuineness.

There were codes that were based on logos such as textual reasoning, coherence of argumentation and the use of Quranic and Hadith evidence. Pathos related codes were connected with emotional appeal, humor, empathy and the feeling of collective identity building. The application of the Aristotle framework was explained by the fact that it can be applied timelessly in the study of persuasive communication and especially in the areas of moral, religious, and political communication (Garver, 2018; Hall, 2022). Using classical rhetorical paradigm to a contemporary religious situation, this study connects ancient rhetorical concepts to the modern pragmatic language.

## **Data Analysis Procedure**

The Thematic Analysis was employed to analyse the data and adhered to the six-step model suggested by Braun and Clarke (2019):

## **Familiarization:**

Repeated reading and listening to the lectures of Mirza to understand main rhetorical and pragmatic details

## **Initial Coding:**

Manual coding of utterances that signaled rhetorical strategies (e.g., self-reference, moral appeal, scriptural citation)

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## **Theme Searching:**

This is the grouping of codes into possible themes according to Aristotle appeals.

## **Theme Reviewing:**

Refining and checking themes to provide internal consistency and uniqueness.

## **Defining and Naming Themes:**

Naming themes like Ethos: Moral Credibility, logos: Textual Reasoning and pathos: Emotional Engagement.

## **Report Production:**

Making the findings part of a logical story connected to the rhetorical model of Aristotle

The study has maintained a reflexive position in the course of the analysis because he recognized the interpretive subjectivity and guaranteed the transparency of analytical choices (Braun and Clarke, 2021). The NVivo software was first viewed on the basis of data management; however, closer work with linguistic texture of the data was viewed as preferring using manual coding.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Theme 1: Ethos Building of Credibility and Moral Authority**

The initial prominent theme is the way Mirza constructed the ethical credibility (ethos) strategically as the basis of his persuasive lecture. He always appears as a dedicated, honest, and honest preacher who talks just by using genuine sources of Islam. Mirza often claims that he is not affiliated with any sectarian or political group as that is shown in the following statement:

I am not hired by any one, neither am I a donor. I say what Quran and Sunnah say.

This statement is consistent with the concept of ethos introduced by Aristotle wherein the moral character and uprightness of the speaker is the key component of lecture persuasion. Mirza is not a person who tries to be financially or institutionally dependent, which increases his credibility by portraying honesty and objectivity. First-person pronouns (I am not an employee of anyone) are a foregrounding technique that helps to establish responsibility and support his self-presentation as a high-minded scholar who is interested in truth and not popularity.

Besides, Mirza actively uses moral distancing to mark his reformist identity as he makes it clear in the following comment:

I would not be interested in that guy, should it be the belief in a Wali, is a part of religion.

The expression, which is not formal, is indicative of a high level of ethical belief and what Aristotle refers to as arete (virtue) and phronesis (practical wisdom). Mirza commits an act of purification by objecting to practices that he considers innovations (bid'ah), and this is what defines what is true Islam as opposed to falsified traditions. Therefore, his ethos appeal is dual-fold: it conveys intellectual sincerity by being faithful to his texts and moral righteousness by being reformist. This twofold construction enables Mirza to take both spiritual and practical authority so that he can be a credible leader in the area of faith.

**Theme 2 Logos Rationalization and Textual Reasoning**

The second theme dwells on logos, the appeal to logic and reason, and which the intellectual portion of the persuasive lecture of Mirza. His lectures are marked by the order of the arguments, logical thinking, and the use of the textual evidence based on the Quran and the reliable sources of hadith. He quite often appeals to a hierarchical order of knowledge:

The Ahle Sunnat of the world consider Qur-an to be after this the most afzal kitab to be Bukhari.

In this case, Mirza works to build logical authority through an ordered epistemology based on the authenticity of texts. The logical appeal is based on the format of reasoning that connects claim, evidence and conclusion. This kind of persuasion is similar to the logos of Aristotle, in which the persuasion is the one that is obtained by rational evidence and intellectual consistency. Likewise, Mirza is an analytical writer who is accurate about linguistic and grammatical issues:

Without knowledge of grammar, how shall we know that the translation of Aala Hazrat is perfectly correct?

This question provokes rational thinking and states the need of linguistic competence to translate religious meaning correctly. The reasoning by Mirza is the utilitarian concept of the strictness of clarity and relevance in that the arguments are factually testable in the mind. His tendency toward constant application of connective logic (if, then, because, therefore) makes his lectures more of a logical process of reasoning instead of a moral exhortation. The correspondence of rationalism, combined with exegesis of the scripture, has shown a peculiar kind of religious intellectualism, in which divine truth is not accepted, as it is, but proved rationally. Mirza has a logos in Aristotelian sense which serves to appeal to the rational minds of his audience leading to critical insight and intellectual involvement. This is especially successful with younger audiences that appreciate rationalized religiosity to dogmatism.

**Theme 3: Pathos -Moving and Engaging the Audience**

The third theme is the theme of pathos or emotional component of persuasion, which Mirza uses to enhance the relationship aspect with his audience. His presentation might be mainly rational but is mixed in with empathetic pleas, humor and a sense of collective inclusivity which creates emotional identification and attentiveness. He frequently has a sense of moral empathy that manifests in a way of inclusiveness and the use of collective conscience:

The separating factor of the Muslims is not the Quran, but it is our egos. When we make ourselves humble, our differences will dissolve.

This quote represents a very passionate appeal to solidarity and humility that appeals to compassion and feeling of joint responsibility. The first person is used to create solidarity and reduce hierarchical distance between the preacher and his audience. Moreover, Mirza uses rhetoric questions to induce both emotional and logical thought:

When the Prophet said so, then why should people go contrary?

The questions are pragmatic triggers that are thought provoking and emotive. Combining the element of emotional coziness with the sense of moral urgency, Mirza tries to touch the hearts of his audience and make them believe in their faith and belonging to the community. He also uses humor to relieve the tension on controversial discussions, a case in point is his ironical statement:

I am larger than they are Barels.

Such a funny reference to self eases sectarian friction and humanizes his character so that critical remarks can be accepted with receptiveness and not defensiveness. This is the type of humor, as Van Dijk (2016) argues, that acts as a discursive tactic that helps to minimize ideological opposition and create connection. The pathos appeal of Mirza is rather mild and restrained, not directed to emotional appeal but to the development of empathy, attention and identification. This appeal to emotions, which is employed in Aristotelian rhetoric, is a supplement to both ethos and logos which makes rational reasons emotionally striking.

### **Interpretation and Discussion**

The thematic results confirm that the rhetorical style adopted by Mirza is a modern interpretation of the use of the Aristotelian persuasion in the digital-religious communication. His ideology is concerned with moral truth and stand-alone-ness, which makes him stand out of politicized or institutionalized clerics. His logos is based on the logic appeal, linguistic proficiency, and the textual faithfulness, which makes it appealing to audiences interested in the empirical appeal. His pathos is based on unity, humility, and humor and can be used to bridge sectarian divides.

Practically, every rhetorical appeal is a speech act which makes and does authority. Statements like I can only speak what Quran and Sunnah say are instances of the act of self-legitimation, whereas such rational sequences as if we do not know grammar are instances of instructive reasoning. Solidarity is carried out by emotional inclusivity (we Muslims are divided...). Combined these rhetorical strategies reveal a mixed discourse of a reformist rationalism, in which the preacher assumes roles of a moral epiblast, a rational teacher and a sympathetic interlocutor. This kind of discussion demonstrates why the rhetorical theory of Aristotle is still relevant in the analysis of contemporary persuasive activities especially in the religious and social sphere.

### **Conclusion**

The current study aimed at analyzing the persuasion techniques that were used by Engineer Muhammad Ali Mirza in his religious talks through the Rhetorical Theory of Aristotle as the main tool of examination. The purpose of this study has been to find out how Mirza builds his authority, credibility, and engagement by using his linguistic and rhetorical decisions by combining both pragmatic analysis and thematic interpretation. The results show that the discourse presented by Mirza can be described by the balanced combination of ethos, logos, and pathos, which can be combined to create a consistent pattern of persuasive communication in religious discourse nowadays. It is proven in the study that ethos or the appeal to the credibility is one of the main pillars of the rhetoric strategy of Mirza. He renders himself as a reformist scholar who is not attached to sectarian prejudice and poses as a man of moral and intellectual integrity. By making the same claims several times like the one of not being the employee of anyone and uttering only what Quran and Sunnah say, Mirza creates an image of independence and purity. Such a moral self-presentation appeals to the notion of ethos as an important part of persuasion that, according to Aristotle, is based on arete ( virtue ) and phronesis (practical wisdom) (Aristotle, 2007; Garver, 2018). The display of moral purity and a focus on objectivity allows Mirza to win the audience, which is a precondition of successful persuasion in

religious communication (Hall, 2022).

The second significant result identifies the importance of logos, or the appeal to logic, in the lecture of Mirza. His lectures are systematic, textual, and analytic, characteristic of his adherence to the idea of rational argument. The fact that he focuses on knowledge-based reasoning is shown in statements like: if we do not know grammar, then how will we know that the translation is the correct one? This analytical accuracy comes in line with the concept of persuasion by rational demonstration and logical reasoning that is outlined by Aristotle. The practical role of logos in the discourse of Mirza is to render religious interpretation intellectually manageable especially among the younger generations, who prefer to believe that issues of faith are governed by logic and empirical knowledge. The convergence of religion with the exposition of rationality is what Fairclough (2010) describes as a form of discourse of rationality, i.e. a way of legitimizing belief by a means of reasoned discourse.

The third dimension, pathos, is manifested in the fact that Mirza can both reach the heart of his audience without losing any academic tone. His empathetic language (we Muslims are split because of our egos), strategic humorous appeal (I am a bigger Barelvi than them) produces an emotional appeal, decrease ideology tension and create empathy. Pathos, in its turn, is not meant to be manipulative but empathetic persuasion, the method of harmonizing moral awareness and emotional appeal (Van Dijk, 2016). Therefore, this emotional appeal is used to support ethos and logos and, to validate the idea of successful persuasion that comes as a result of the combination of character, logic, and emotion. These rhetorical appeals go together to make a triadic persuasive strategy that would help Mirza gain authority, keep the audience ripe, and offer reformist interpretations with the intellectual soundness. Ethos, logos, and pathos interdependence is an indication that religious discourse is multidimensional. Ethos justifies logos via the basis of morally virtuous reasoning and pathos makes intellectual arguments reachably appealing. This rhetorical combination indicates what Braun and Clarke (2019) refer to as thematic coherence, in which thematic interdependent patterns of meaning create an overall communicative pattern.

In a practical sense, the rhetorical strategies of Mirza execute several speech acts, which support his persuasive intentions. His declarative words are self-legitimation acts; interrogatives are acts of cognition that seek reflection; and emotive acts are acts of affiliation that establish solidarity between speaker and audience. These techniques are consistent with the more widespread roles of religious rhetoric, in which persuasion is not only concerned with the transmission of beliefs but also with the construction of identities and the establishment of morality (Wodak and Meyer, 2016). In this regard, the discourse of Mirza is a contemporary re-placement of religious authority wherein one is persuaded based on reason, authenticity and inclusivity instead of doctrinal power.

Another aspect of the study that adds to the awareness of the changes in the traditional principles of rhetoric is the transformation of digital religious discourse through the prism of the classical ones. The lectures delivered by Mirza on YouTube are a perfect example of the hybrid character of digital persuasion, in which the ethos is formulated through the access and partiality, the logos is built through the use of intertextual reasoning, and the pathos is established through the affective connectivity of the online space. According to Hutchins (2021), digital preachers have to walk the fine line between credibility and visibility and the engagement with the audience, and the dynamic is evident across the Mirza communicative style. Essentially, this study

confirms the traditional significance of the rhetorical framework by Aristotle in the analysis of modern religious discourse. The results prove that the concept of ethos, logos, and pathos are still analytical tools to analyze contemporary persuasive communication. The discussion of Mirza is the best example of how the traditional modes of rhetoric can be implemented in the pragmatic and digital environment to address the communicative demands of the media-literate audience that rapidly proves to be critical.

Moreover, the thematic analysis study design is qualitative in the sense that it not only provides the methodological depth of identifying the existence of rhetorical appeals but also shows its practical roles in context. The combination of the Aristotle theory with thematic analysis offers a more subtle reason and explanation of the process of persuasion as a linguistic and social action. It also implies that persuasive discourse in religion is carried out by a combination of logic, morality and emotion and that this persuasion creates not just beliefs but identities and values of a community. Finally, the discussion proves that the persuasive techniques of Engineer Muhammad Ali Mirza are the models of the rhetoric of reformist rationality- a discourse that can make peace between faith and the intellect, tradition and critical discourse. The use of ethos, logos, and pathos, in his calls, makes up a convincing account that encourages religious insights based on genuineness and calmness. Therefore, the research adds to the wider debate on religious pragmatics, digital rhetoric and linguistic persuasion that argues that the theory of rhetoric as developed by Aristotle remains relevant in explaining the processes of influence, authority and belief in discourse in the twenty first century.

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