

Submission Date: 3/07/2021 Accepted Date: 14/09/2021 Publication Date: 15/12/2021

HAMKA'S QURAN EXEGESIS AND ITS THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Tinjauan Ringkas tentang Manhaj Tafsir HAMKA dan Landasan Teoretisnya

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Abstract

The paper discusses principle of Qur'anic interpretation as brought forth by Hamka (1908-1981) in Tafsir al-Azhar. It analyzes the comprehensive method he crafted and the dynamic approach he brought out in textual exegesis. The extensive discussion and exposition of legal thought and ruling, history, mysticism, moral, theology, religion, ethics, culture and philosophy reflected his classic and profound ijtihad (independent reasoning) as substantively employed in this work. The method used in this study was descriptive and analytical. It looked into themes brought forth in Tafsir al-Azhar and deduce its understanding and principles that the author tried to formulate and projected. The study concluded that Tafsir al-Azhar was crafted based on certain al-adabi al-ijtima'i's approach (cultural-social form of exegesis). It was a highly authoritative and monumental work produced with dominant ethico-legal and contextual analysis being a standard reference of tafsir in the Malay-Indonesian world. The Tafsir emphasized on rational understanding of the Qur'an reflecting profound impact and inspiration from Tafsir al-Manar, its principal reference, and was highly influential in the intellectual tradition of tafsir that flourished in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago.

Keywords: Hamka, Quranic tafsir, Methodology

Abstrak

Kajian ini membincangkan metodologi Hamka (Februari 17, 1908 - Julai 24, 1981) dalam penyusunan kitab *Tafsir al-Azhar* nya. Ia membahaskan secara komprehensif manhaj yang diketengahkan dalam perbincangan dan penelitian ayat-ayat al-Qur'an. Latar perbincangannya yang ekstensif dan penggarapannya yang luas tentang hukum,

sejarah, pemikiran, tasauf, akhlak, akidah, tamadun dan falsafah menzahirkan kekuatan fikrah tafsir dan ijtihadnya yang kritis. Metode kajian adalah bersifat deskriptif dan analitik. Ia meninjau corak pemikiran yang dibawakan Hamka dalam tafsirnya dan merumuskan kefahaman dan fikrah dasar yang cuba dikembangkannya. Dapatan kajian menyimpulkan bahawa *Tafsir al-Azhar* membawa corak pentafsiran *al-adabi al-ijtima'i* (sastera budaya) yang mendalam dengan menekankan kekuatan akliyah dan prinsip rasional dalam pemahaman ayat-ayat al-Quran. Ia memperlihatkan aspirasi ke arah pembaharuan dalam pandangan tafsirnya yang terkesan dengan manhaj dan fahaman Muhammad Abduh dan Rashid Rida dalam *Tafsir al-Manar* dan telah memberikan pengaruh yang mendalam dalam perkembangan pemikiran tafsir dan tradisi intelektualnya di Nusantara.

Kata kunci: Hamka, Tafsir al-Azhar, Metodologi, Umat Islam, Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

The paper discusses Hamka's methodology in *Tafsir al-Azhar*. The *Tafsir* was composed while languishing in prison on subversive charge under Sukarno's Old Order regime. The work was unprecedented and best known as his most lasting and influential legacy that has brought significant influence in the modern history of tafsir in the Malay Archipelago. It continued to reverberate his intellectual and theological impact and aspiration in the context of modern and dynamic religious life and tradition in this region. A highly accomplished and profound work as described by Ahmad Syafii Maarif (2014): *A completed work of tafsir in 30 juz by the named of Tafsir al-Azhar was another proof of his expertise as mufasssir (Qur'anic exegete)*.

This study was conducted to examine Hamka's contribution and method in producing this monumental tafsir and to analyse its impact and lasting influence in historical tradition of tafsir in the Archipelago. Given many writings on this *Tafsir* that have been produced, this study tried to summarize and extend the findings and analyses of every aspect of *Tafsir*, studying along previous notes on such aspects as *asbab al-nuzul* (occasions of revelation), *nasikh* and *mansukh* (the abrogated and abrogating verses), method and direction of tafsir (haluan tafsir), juristic ruling, and deduction of legal-ethico principle. The study begins with a note on the background of Hamka's life and his struggle to mobilize religious reform and proliferation of Islamic dakwah, through his engagement and association with Sarekat Islam and Muhammadiyah. This is followed by in-depth analyses investigating and probing the historical backdrop of the *Tafsir*. The study concludes with a brief summary of the significance framework of *Tafsir*, in terms of the formulation of tafsir, approaches of interpretation projected of the *ayah*, and its relative influence in the modern Islamic movement inaugurated in the region.

LIFE HISTORY

Shaykh Haji Abdul Malik bin Abdul Karim Amrullah (HAMKA) was born in 1908/1325 in Danau Maninjau, Padang Panjang, Sumatra. He was the eldest son of Shaykh Abdul Karim bin Amrullah, a pioneer in the Kaum Muda (young faction) movement aspiring for Islamic reform in Minangkabau “*who started his movement in 1906 after returning from Mecca.*” (Rusydi Hamka, 2002). Hamka grew up in an intense atmosphere of conflict between the exponents of orthodoxy (traditionalists) and modernist (reformers), that “since childhood he has heard intense debates between Young Turks and Old Guards about religious beliefs” (Rusydi Hamka, 2002). In 1918, his father established a Pesantren (traditional boarding school) called Sumatera *Thawalib*, and Abdul Malik “witnessed his father’s activities in spreading his ideology and belief” (Rusydi Hamka, 2002).

The religious struggle led by his father, Shaykh Abdul Karim bin Amrullah, coming from the young factions (kaum muda) had broad influence in bringing revolutionary ideas and new spirit and consciousness in Minangkabau. His radical outlook was inspired from the development of Muhammadiyah in Java, brought forth by Kiyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan, and Sheikh Muhammad Tahir Jalaluddin, striving for modernist cause for renewal and realizing social and educational development for the masses. Their reformative work was initially inspired from the Egyptian influence of Pan Islamic movement espoused by such liberal reformers such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida. Their influence profoundly impressed him (Hamka) and consequently propelled him to carried out and rallied the cause for reform. He aspired to modernize the archaic and decadent ways of backward and reactionary tradition and dismantling the dogmatic and traditional doctrine of taqlid (blind adherence to traditional ruling) and stagnant religious belief and orthodoxy. This impact was clearly spelt out in his *Tafsir*: “Minangkabau in particular and Sumatra in general sank deeply in rotten and old ways of conservative orthodoxy. Since the arrival of Islam it has yet to find the essence of religion. The basis of understanding is the understanding of sufi’s *wahdatul wujud* (the oneness of being), being religious is the entrance into *suluk* (mysticism). The law is bound by blind following (*taqlid*). Static!” (Hamka, 1982).

Late in 1924, Hamka moved to Java, and Yogyakarta and met H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto, Kibagus Hadikusumo, R.M. Soerjopranoto and H. Fakhruddin and enjoyed acquaintance and association with pioneers of modern Islamic political and social movement from “Syarikat Islam Hindia Timur” and Muhammadiyah. Then he left for Pekalongan to meet his teacher and brother in-law the learned A.R. Sutan Mansur who headed the Muhammadiyah Pekalongan’s branch (Voorzitter) and came to know and acquainted with Citrosuarno, Mas Ranuwiharjo, Mas Usman Pujotomo and Mohammad Roem, who were among the key leaders in the Jong Islamieten Bond and Sarekat Islam that was growing and expanding in those region (Hamka, 2009).

In 1929 he married Siti Raham at the age of 21 and continued to actively led Muhammadiyah's branches in Padang Panjang and Bengkalis. After successfully mobilizing the struggle and rallying and recruiting the young cadre, in 1931 he was sent to Makasar as Muhammadiyah representative missionary to initiate an aggressive infiltration of dakwah. In 1936, he migrated to Medan to lead the periodical *Pedoman Masyarakat* and formed Muhammadiyah representative missionary movement in North Sumatra and East Sumatra until it was interrupted and devastated by the imminent invasion and occupation of Japan in 1942. After independence, he actively mobilized the masses and undertake to assist and sustain the structure of local governance. In 1950 he was appointed officials of the Ministry of Religion under the ministerial of K.H. Wahid Hasyim. Given the privilege to serve in the distinctive position of group F officer, he was assigned to teach in several Islamic institutions, including Perguruan Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri (PTAIN) Yogyakarta, Universitas Islam Jakarta, Fakultas Hukum dan Falsafah Muhammadiyah at Padang Panjang, Universitas Muslim Jakarta (UMI) Makasar and Universitas Islam Sumatera Utara (UISU) (Hamka, 2009).

On February 17, 1958 after receiving his Honorary Causa Doctorate from Al-Azhar University, Egypt, he left for Mecca to perform umrah, and coincided with his 50th birthday, under the shade of Kaabah, he invoked and prayed "that the rest of his life would be useful to pursue the ambitions spearheaded by his father through Sumatera Tawalib and Muhammadiyah that he became part of it" (Rusydi Hamka, 2002).

In July 1959 he published a periodical *Panji Masyarakat* with K.H. Fakhri Usman that advocated issues of Islamic culture and knowledge. The magazine was banned by Sukarno on August 17, 1960 for its inclusion of the controversial article by Dr. Mohammad Hatta "Demokrasi Kita" that criticized the conception of "Guided Democracy" (Demokrasi Terpimpin) and the violation of constitution by Sukarno. It was replaced with *Gema Islam* in 1962 that was ran by Lieutenant General Sudirman and Brigadier General Muchias Rowi (Rusydi Hamka, 2002).

In 1964 he was arrested on trumped-up and subversive charges and released after Sukarno's Old Order regime was overthrown in 1966. Here in the solitary confinement of his dark cell he composed almost the entire pages of *Tafsir al-Azhar*. In 1967 he republished the *Panji Masyarakat* under Suharto's New Order regime and continued to espoused the ideal and essence of reform propagated by Sumatera Tawalib and Muhammadiyah. He also served as the De Facto Leader of the Council of Ulama Indonesia until 1981 and Advisor at Muhammadiyah Central Leadership (Rusydi Hamka, 2002).

METHODOLOGY

The study was designed on qualitative framework using descriptive and analytical approaches. It employed historical, comparative and deductive method to analyze the data. Data were derived from primary and secondary literature and related historical sources, documentation, archive and files. These provide and constitute the materials for reviewing and deducing the theoretical ground of the premise of tafsir that make up Tafsir al-Azhar.

TAFSIR AL-AZHAR

Tafsir al-Azhar was undoubtedly one of the leading works of tafsir in modern times. Adopting the classical and modern ways in interpreting the text, it set forth an extensive analysis of the spirit of the Qur'an and its legal-ethical principles, with strong emphasis on rational and contextual approaches. Employing an analytical, scientific and socio-historical ground, it was designed to present a contemporary interpretation on various aspects of law, fiqh, mysticism, faith, philosophy, science, nature, and ethics in the Qur'an. The exposition dealt with major issues concerning the history of the text, basic framework of tafsir, major themes and theological arguments on speculative verses, and detailed and broad discussion emphasizing on asbab al-nuzul (occasion of revelation) and various conception and worldview it projected and its intrinsic meaning and connotation. The substantive way of debates and arguments he employed in discussing such constructive verses and themes relating to nature, history, culture, and religion of the divine writ was profoundly summed up by Wan Sabri Wan Yusof (1997) in his thesis:

In sum, Tafsir al-Azhar is an extensive work of Qur'an commentary which covers non-religion subjects as well as religious ones. This detailed exposition creates the tendency to overstretch the limits and the obvious meanings of the verses.

The basic ideas formulated in his tafsir seems to encapsulate the entire Qur'anic worldview and its moral and spiritual connotation he tried to project, particularly his essential outlook and ideas on Islamic faith, theology, mystics, shariah and law. This was broadly defined by Milhan Yusuf (1995) in his thesis:

In his commentary, Hamka has probably included the sum of his ideas particularly those pertaining to religious aspects. With regards to the religious aspects, he mostly discusses the problems of theology, sufism and law.

The defining pattern of tafsir employed was descriptive and analytical and certain form of *al-adabi al-ijtima'i* (ethical and social) approaches, emphasizing on social dimension and rational and contextual understanding of the Qur'an. Much of his commentary was exceptionally based on rational and scientific approaches

adopted by Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida in *Tafsir al-Manar* that inspired his critical and rational stand and dynamic paradigm of the texts, portraying systematic treatment and effective hermeneutical and philosophical argument and criticism. The profound inspiration from the authoritative work of *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Hakim li al-Ustadh Muhammad 'Abduh* was expressed in *Tafsir al-Azhar*:

Despite that he wrote only 12 juz' (chapters), nevertheless the compilation was useful to guide in continuing this interpretation of 'al-Azhar' till the end...the strategic approach he uphold was still fresh and can be emulated and does not stale and exhausted (Hamka, 1982).

The *Tafsir* seeks to elaborate Abduh's profound intellectual ideal and his penetrative insight on the Qur'an. Informed by his progressive and contemporary outlooks, it manifested his rational interpretation and creative reasoning and *ijtihad*, implying substantially rational and contextual understanding of the text:

A very captivating tafsir to the interpreter, for instances, is Tafsir al-Manar, by Sayyid Rashid Redha, based on the teachings of his teacher Imam Muhammad Abduh. His tafsir, apart from specifically describing knowledge concerning religion, hadith, fiqh and history, also adapting the verses to contemporary context and situation of politics and society, which is appropriate to the time when the tafsir was composed (Hamka, 1982).

He was also impressed by Sayyid Qutb's massive commentary, tafsir *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* (In the Shade of the Qur'an) which immensely influence his contextualist approaches and argumentative nature in tafsir 'al-Azhar': *Sayyid Qutb - this tafsir, which ended up being interpreted in thirty juz' (chapter), I assumed as very appealing and reasonable for this age...so that the tafsir written by Sayyid Qutb also significantly impacted me in composing this tafsir (Hamka, 1982).*

In addition he also referred to other impeccable works of theology, mysticism, prophetic tradition (hadith) and Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) in writing his tafsir: *Crucial works in tasawuf, tauhid, religious philosophy, hadith of the Prophet (saw), history of Islamic giants and warriors and life of mystic and scholars, the path of the hereafter, I peruse and infuse into my soul. (Hamka, 1982).* The basic ideas outlined in the tafsir encapsulate the modern perspective concerning the development and legacy of tafsir and its intellectual tradition in the Muslim world, from the Near Eastern to African continents to Malay-Indonesian archipelago. It inspired significant debates and discussion drawn from major sources of tafsir from classical and medieval ages, including the works of great *mufasssir* such as al-Tabari, al-Zamakhshari, al-Razi, al-Qasimi to al-Jawhari, Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida, Sayyid Qutb and al-Maraghi who envisioned and articulate a broad and immaculate ideas and dimension of tafsir. The principle source drawn from the Malay world was the 16-17th century

masterpiece, known as *Tarjuman al-Mustafid* by 'Abd al-Ra'uf ibn 'Ali al-Fansuri al-Sinkili (1615-1693 CE), a well-known Muslim jurist and mufti of Aceh Sultanate. In compiling his work, Hamka has outlined an effective method that propounded and expressed a progressive and rational interpretation, focusing on the deep-layered meaning of the text and investigating the semantic relations of its themes. The extensive and deeply intellectual debates of his tafsir clearly reflecting the condition of his societal life and its underdeveloped nature, aiming to challenge the outdated and archaic rules and flaws and naivety of system and orthodoxy in his decadent society. A fact particularly observed by Wan Sabri Wan Yusof (2008) about the context of tafsir that he was working out trying to answer the characteristic problems entangled in his social and local religious life:

It is clear that Hamka was a figure resulting from the context of history dating back to his times. He was determined and steadfast in attempting to interpreting the Qur'an despite having to face criticism and smears campaign. The interpretation of the Qur'an was often colored by the tendency of interpretation, and it was the textual legitimacy of his opinion. Taking such a stand was not a fault since surely, the Qur'an aims to guide human being with general rules. It is up to the individual to use it within the specified scope.

Tafsir al-Azhar bring out progressive social and cultural values which embraced the dynamic precepts and worldview of the Qur'an.

Immersing its ideas on reforming communal life and projecting new consciousness on moral and spiritual ground, he consistently undertook to bring societal reform and mobilized critical awareness on Quranic weltanschauung, to confront the catastrophic plight and predicament of his countrymen and its spiritual crisis. In this regard, the *tafsir* has break the ground in challenging the outdated way of traditional ruling and formulating afresh rational and dynamic outlook of life, bringing modern and critical appreciation of the societal need for development and progress, while criticizing the inequity and wrong perpetrated in society. His philosophical trajectory was quite influential in embodying the idea of renewal and rationality, that he “*strongly opposed to the stiffness and obsolete way of adopting religion. (instead of upholding to the tradition of fuqaha) One must return to the Qu'ran and the Hadith*” (Hamka, 1996).

BACKGROUND OF TAFSIR

The *Tafsir* was first dictated from his lecture delivered at Masjid al-Azhar, Kebayoran Baru Jakarta after the dawn prayers. These notes, which has been developed and worked out since 1959, was featured “in a mid-monthly magazine called ‘*Gema Islam*’ which was first published on 15 January 1962 replacing the *Panji Masyarakat* that

was banned by Sukarno in 1960” (Hamka, 1967). The *Tafsir* highlights the challenging life of the author under the repressive regime, and the cultural and social unrest following the revolutionary struggle against colonizers and harsh political pressures, apart from his pioneering work as Muslim activists and leading Islamic proselytizer throughout Indonesia. In his note, he revealed that the *Tafsir* has been widely acclaimed and making influential and phenomenal impact throughout the country, professing:

The lessons of tafsir after the dawn prayer in the great mosque of al-Azhar has been heard everywhere throughout Indonesia...all the lessons after dawn thus were subsequently arranged and published in the periodical Gema Islam (Hamka, 1967).

Most of the commentary was accomplished by Hamka in prison while being held under the Old Order regime for almost 2 years and 4 months (January 27, 1964 – January 21, 1967). Falsely charged of attempting a coup against the democratic government, which sent him languishing in his solitary confinement, he determined to earnestly and unwaveringly committed to started composing the *Tafsir* with strong resilience and passion:

since throughout the detention, apart from working on [Qur'an] interpretation in the daytime; at night I got promising chance with expansive and spacious time for worship to God...tahajjud [night prayer] and invoking God after midnight is the most effective remedy for the gloomy and loneliness...at a time when all the means of communication on earth are closed, the connection to the sky is wide open (Hamka, 1967).

He named it *Tafsir al-Azhar* in conjunction with the name of the mosque built at his homeland in Kebayoran Baru, Jakarta. This name was inspired by Shaykh Mahmud Syaltut who aspired to embedded the seed of learning and intellectual root in Indonesia: *Then after the turn of the great Shaykh giving his message and sermon, he said among others: That from this day on, I as the Shaykh (Rector) of Jami' al-Azhar conferred this mosque the name of "al-Azhar", hoping that it will become al-Azhar in Jakarta, as there was al-Azhar in Cairo (Hamka, 1967).* The wish subsequently was realized by Hamka in his tafsir: *Immediately I gave her the name of Tafsir al-Azhar, whose name was given by Shaykh Jami' al-Azhar himself (Hamka 1967).* Considering this, in his writings on Hamka, Ahmad Syafii Maarif (2014), former Chairman of Muhammadiyah, considered him an independent figure in quest of truth, with resolute and unwavering spirit of ijtihad:

as an independent personality, who always seeks the truth, Hamka has been the precursor of the great foundation and pillars of civilized Islam, that is (characteristically) moderate, inclusive and far-reaching.

And this is what was drawn from his pioneering work *Tafsir al-Azhar*, which was crafted from the religious cause of reform that he brought forth to elevate the intellectual consciousness and the societal ideal and universal spirit of humanity.

METHODOLOGY OF TAFSIR

Tafsir al-Azhar was written based on significant framework of tafsir manifesting nuance literary style, referring to the authoritative ways of “Arabic language, salafis (righteous forebearers) interpretation, *asbab al-nuzul* (occasion of revelations), *al-nasikh wa'l-mansukh* (the abrogated and abrogating verses), hadith narrative, fiqh and legal thought and Islamic intellectual history and its scientific and religious tradition. It fulfills the basic criteria and condition set forth by the scholars to interpret the Qur'an, by also emphasizing the need for some expertise in natural sciences in a reasonable way, in order to giving it a general interpretation, that covered the whole spectrum of its themes and premises:

The author of this Tafsir has read the condition put forward by the authority, for anyone who aspired to interprets it must sufficiently knew Arabic with all its tools, also knowing the rendering of previous masters, also knowing asbab al-nuzul, that is, the reasons for the revelation of the verses, also knowing the condition of the al-nasikh and al-mansukh, also knowing the science of hadith, especially those related to the verse being interpreted, also knowing the science of jurisprudence to situate the law. These conditions were indeed strenuous and fitting. If there were no such conditions, then certainly everyone would dare to interprets the Qur'an haphazardly. The requirement of knowledge that made a condition by the authority, Thanks God, this author has slightly mastered, but he does not claiming he was very erudite in all of the knowledge...there were other conditions that were neglected by previous scholars, to wit, in the Qur'an there are many verses that describes matters concerning nature, the ocean with its waves, the ship with its voyage, its plants, the wind and the storm, the clouds carrying rains, the stars and its planetary station and its constellations – as well as the state of the sun and the moon. Verses like this were far exceeding and much more than verses about law and jurisprudence (Hamka, 2017).

The *Tafsir* also compared the substantive arguments of jurists and legal authority in the legal verses and strengthen the most preferred legal proofs of *mazhab* (school of thought) based on his own reasoning and *ijtihad*, reflecting based on broad understanding of the law: *The interpreter maintains cohesive relation between naqal (narrative) and intellect. Between riwayat (transmitted report and tradition) and dirayah (comprehension). The interpreter not only quoting or deriving opinions from previous authority, but also uses his own survey and experiences (Hamka, 1967).*

Throughout his discussion of some pertinent issues and doctrines disputed by authority, for instances regarding the verses of *al-nasikh* and *al-mansukh*, Hamka categorically rejected the theory of abrogating verses developed in classical legal doctrine. This is shown in his explanation of surah *al-Baqarah* verse 143, relating to the changing of *qibla*: “And thus have We willed you to be a community of the middle way, so that [with your lives] you might bear witness to the truth before all mankind, and that the Apostle might bear witness to it before you. And it is only to the end that We might make a clear distinction between those who follow the Apostle and those who turn about on their heels that We have appointed [for this community] the direction of prayer which thou [O Prophet] hast formerly observed: for this was indeed a hard test for all those whom God has guided aright. But God will surely not lose sight of your faith – for, behold, God is most compassionate towards man, a dispenser of grace.” (Muhammad Asad, 1980). Hamka brings narrations taken from major traditionalists and textual testimonies in defending his position:

This is a narration related to the change of qibla, accompanied by several other hadith narrations. According to the narration from Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Mundzir, and al-Baihaqi, they claimed that Ibn ‘Abbas once said that the first nasikh-mansukh found in the Qur’an was those matters relating to transferring of qibla, but some other authorities maintained that there was no such nasikh-mansukh in this matter. Since, when the Prophet Muhammad (saw) facing the qibla of Jerusalem, it was according to his own ijtihad, before there was any provision stipulated by God. Since, all this while, the position of Jerusalem is still exceptional, and the Kaaba itself was still occupied with idols (Hamka, 2017).

From his comparative analysis of conflicting views of Muslim legal school of thought, it revealed the depth of his interpretative and argumentative ways in articulating the issues debated by the four major sects and in formulating and giving his robust and concluding ideas with conclusive and authoritative proof brought forth in the discussion, as reflected from his interpretation relating to matters of Hajj and Umrah in surah *al-Baqarah*, verse 196, “And perform the pilgrimage and the pious visit [to Mecca] in honour of God; and if you are held back, give instead whatever offering you can easily afford. And do not shave your heads until the offering has been sacrificed; but he from among you who is ill or suffers from an ailment of the head shall redeem himself by fasting, or alms, or [any other] act of worship. And if you are hale and secure, then he who takes advantage of a pious visit before the [time of] pilgrimage shall give whatever offering he can easily afford; whereas he who cannot afford it shall fast for three days during the pilgrimage and for seven days after your return: that is, ten full [days]. All this relates to him who does not live near the Inviolable House of Worship. And remain conscious of God, and know that God is severe in retribution” (Muhammad Asad 1980), which portrayed the breath and high

level of *ijtihad* in the matter of *hajj* from the shariah standpoint and consensus views of the majority: *In term of umrah, all authority agreed that it was not a pillar of Islam as hajj.*

There is only difference of opinion, whether it is just a commendable practice (mandub) or obligatory one, even though it is not a pillar of Islam. Some authority pointed out that it is obligatory, some of the opinion that it is sunnah. However, when the act was performed, it must be accomplished. Whoever has started the pious visit, whereas he did not complete it, then he was a sinner. It was the same with the commendable act of nawafil prayers, which were other than five prayers. Once it has been started, it must be accomplished perfectly, it cannot be stopped in the middle, just because it is sunnah. Relating to these matters, we openly invite and let these be studied specifically. Since all the great jurists of our following, Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik, Imam Syafi'i and Imam Ahmad all coincide that Hajj and Umrah must be performed completely, but apart from wukuf (staying) in Arafah, which they all coincided that is the culmination of the pillar of Hajj, there are some differences of opinion on other things. There is a manasik (rites) that Malik said obligatory, while Syafi'i said a pillar, whilst Hanbali said a sunnah. However, we see that even people performing Hajj in Mecca hailed from four different Sunni sects, Shiites and Kharijites, in spite of these, there were no striking differences (Hamka, 2017).

The significance framework of *Tafsir* was clearly delineated in the preliminary section of "Haluan Tafsir" (direction of tafsir) that specifically outlined the unique orientation and school of tafsir that he adhered to. He tends to interpret the verse from its outward and explicit (as well as implicit) meaning as intended from the literal expression of the verse. This foundational principle was laid out in his extensive explanation, couple with distinctive and interpretative notes, justifying and disclosing certain empirical proof and personal experience that guided his commentary:

Every interpretation of the Qur'an revealed the pattern of personal inclination of the interpreter...and we also herein want to explain our own position and particular direction, so that if something were found that is not found in other interpretations, the rationale can be known, by knowing the direction and notion of the interpreter while interpreting the text...preferably the way we are abiding by now, that each verse is interpreted according to the expression of word and meaning and the hidden secrets contained in it. So should someone interested in investigating the content of a verse more deeply, he extended in this particular area by going into the works of authority produced outside the commentary, so that the works might also help him in understanding more in the meaning of the verse (Hamka, 1967).

In general, the *Tafsir* highlights certain technical methods of *al-adabi al-ijtima'i* (socio-cultural) which emphasized on rational and contextual interpretation of the *ayah* from socio-cultural context and communal life and reality in Indonesia. From this perspective, *Tafsir al-adabi al-ijtima'i* is defined as “*a pattern of tafsir that elaborates the allusions and directives of Qur’anic verses that directly relates to society and its historical process, as well as efforts to overcome the malaise and problems of society through instructions of the verses*” (Abdurrahman Rusli Tanjung, 2014).

According to Abd. Ghafir (2016) *tafsir al-adabi al-ijtima'i* emerged as a results from the development of modern times to addressed contemporary issues, which has its own unique characteristics which differed from other patterns of *tafsir*. Summarizing the views of Muhammad Husayn al-Dhahabi (1976) he referred it as “an interpretation that explains the verses of the Qur’an based on the accuracy of the expressions projected in the language, emphasizing on the main reasoning and intention of revelation, then applying it to the order and directions of social life. Such as in the solving of societal problems malaise of Muslim people in general, in line with socio-cultural need in the nation life.” This views is reinforced by Manna’ Khalil al-Qattan (1996) who describes it as “a *tafsir* enriched with narrations from the *salaf* (righteous forebearers) and with descriptions of *sunnatullah* (order of nature) that occurs in socio-cultural life, outlining the style of Qur’anic expression, by revealing its elusive meaning, using a simple parable, and trying to explains elusory problems, aspiring to restore the glory and honor of Islam, and addressing the malaise of society through Qur’anic guidance.” Apart from elucidating and explicating the meaning with meticulous and beautiful expression, it seeks “to connect the text of the Qur’an being studied with the existing social reality and cultural system and order” (Abd al-Hayy al-Farmawy, 1994).

In his effort to relates the teachings of the Qur’an with the cultural and social context and bringing structural reform of life, the commentary presented in *Tafsir al-Azhar* seeks to connect it with moral and ethical values and paradigm to driving the ideal of religion and realizing the conscious practice of its teaching. This is expressed in his commentary of surah *al-Baqarah* verse 78, on account of the law revealed to the Children of Israel “And there are among them unlettered people who have no real knowledge of the divine writ, [following] only wishful beliefs and depending on nothing but conjecture” (Muhammad Asad, 1980). Hamka remarks:

They are only blindly following the teacher. What the teacher said, that is right. Investigating and using one’s own mind is unfeasible, even writing and reading is out of question, let alone reading the Torah. All they hold is what the teacher told. So that they are laden with tales, delusions, absurd myths and fables, not the least close to the truth. If invited to converse about the present, they are

only willing to tell the past. When invited into reality, they run into fantasies. Their religion is nothing but conjecture, not knowing true or false. However, for them that illusion is a firm hold. And they could not be reprimanded for their mistakes. Their understanding had become rotten and frozen. In obedience, they hold on to what the teacher dictated without using their head. They have a narrow and insular heart and hating others (Hamka, 2017).

His interpretation incorporates the influential method of *al-ma'thur* (transmitted narration) and *al-ra'y* (rational judgement) in interpretation by espousing the rightful way of rational analysis and emphasizing the need for higher level of *ijtihad* and intellectual transformation in the current tradition of *tafsir*. It approaches the text with detail examination (*tahlili*) which outline extensive ways of commentary, probing into the detail meaning of the sentence and its philosophical significance. The substantive inquiry provided to elucidate crucial aspects of morality, mysticism, history, science, jurisprudence, nature, artistic and literary dimension of the verses.

MORAL PHILOSOPHY

The *Tafsir* also known for its highly persuasive philosophical and moral analysis presenting many reflections of philosophical-ethical meaning alluded to in the divine-writ. Many critical themes of moral and ethical principles were revealed, highlighting and analyzing the extensive theme of philosophy and morality, as alluded in his other crucial works. The philosophy developed in his works reflected the significant and highly moral and spiritual ideal of Islam, as shown by his interpretation of surah *al-Hujurat* verse 17: "Many people think that they have bestowed a favour upon thee [O Prophet (saw)] by having surrendered [to thee]. Say thou: "Deem not your surrender a favour unto me; nay, but it is God who bestows a favour upon you by showing you the way to faith – if you are true to your word!" (Muhammad Asad 1980), Hamka proceeds:

The warning mentioned above is for our own barometer to test our honesty. If Allah favour us with guidance and then we embrace Islam, we should strengthen our faith in God and follow that faith with righteous deeds. By degrees, an increasingly much more will be felt how the favour of Islam to ourselves, makes us a meaningful and highly worthwhile human. We live in Islam, not asking others to sacrifice for us, but we are sacrificing and exert favours for others. No matter how much effort and favour we do, it does not match the favour of faith itself which create self-esteem in ours, so that it felt highly priced than the life itself. It is wrong to feel proud we have doing good in this world. Since if we do not do good, what else will we do? Are we going to do evil? (Hamka, 1982).

Hamka has written about 134 titles. His first book “Si Sabariyah” was published in 1928. With the sellout of a number of books and periodicals he led, such as “Khathibul Ummah” in 1925 and with several publications of “Kemahuan Zaman”, he became positive in composing books of Islamic theology. In 1929, he authored several outstanding and successful works: “Sejarah Sayidina Abu Bakar Shiddiq; Ringkasan Tarikh Umat Islam; Agama dan Perempuan; Kepentingan Tabligh; Adat Minangkabau dan Agama Islam” (Hamka 2009). He also produced novels such as “Tenggelamnya Kapal Van der Wijck (1937); Di Bawah Lindungan Ka’bah (1936); Merantau ke Deli and Tuan Direktur (1939)”. A highly philosophical and humanistic impression also deeply embedded in his other influential works such as: “Pandangan Hidup Muslim, Peribadi, Bohong di Dunia, Akhlaqul Karimah, Lembaga Hidup (1940), Lembaga Budi (1940), Lembaga Hikmat, Falsafah Hidup (1939), Perkembangan Tasauf dari Abad ke Abad, Renungan Tasawuf, Tasauf Modern (1939), Dari Hati ke Hati and etc. Combined with his approaches in formulating a tafsir of *al-adabi al-ijtima’i* (socio-cultural form of exegesis), it shows resolute struggle in envisioning and bringing new consciousness of Islamic life and developing religiously harmonious character and personality with credible moral spiritual principle. This can be summarized from his interpretation of surah al-Nisa’ verse 146: “But excepted shall be they who repent, and live righteously, and hold fast unto God, and grow sincere in their faith in God alone: for these shall be one with the believers – and in time God will grant to all believers a mighty reward” (Muhammad Asad 1980). Hamka noted:

...the four conditions are the cure for the mental illness. Hypocrisy and infidelity as well. Sometimes feeling remorse for a sin, making higher in spiritual dignity than a person who felt he has never sinned. Remorse for perverted soul of the past caused someone always trying to achieve Tath-hir (purification) and Tazkiyah (sanctification). The intention in the heart also aspired to rise out of the valley of debasement. That’s why he always tried. That endeavor will never fail. God himself will help pull the person’s hand up (Hamka, 1983).

ISLAMIC REFORM

In his struggle to uphold and strengthen the ideal of reform (*islah*), Hamka had brought forth the aspiration of reform in his *Tafsir* that aspired to bring the modern aspiration and new religious consciousness in the Islamic world and to reinvigorate its rational and scientific spirit. This ideal was influenced by the influential pan Islamic notion exemplified by its chief ideologue Sayid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and further espoused by his chief disciple Muhammad Rashid Rida in al-Manar. They inspired significant theological and religious reform advocating modernist and

revivalist cause, espousing progressive and liberal ideas in the leading modernist newspaper *al-'Urwatul Wuthqa* in Paris, and continued to be reverberated in *Majallat al-Manar* and *Tafsir al-Manar* in Egypt. This had profound influence on Hamka's extensive tafsir and analysis, showing his admiration and sympathize of modernist cause spearheaded by Muhammad Abduh, as reflected in his commentary on Abduh's social interpretation and legal opinion (fatwa) and its dynamic repercussion on Islamic religiosity and legal ruling:

In modern times, nowadays, Syeikh Muhammad Abduh once asked the opinion on laborers who work hard day and night in mining by taking turn (that) they can pay fidyah (compensation), not qada' (replacement). Since, some of them going to work at night, only come out tomorrow at noon. And, some a daylong, only come out at night. Some, a nightlong, only returned home at the morning. Probably, included also here ship workers, sailors, and the like. Those seafarers not only travelers anymore, even on the ship was their livelihoods from young to old age until retirement. If only after retirement, you were asked to make a qada' (replacement), how much must be replaced. Only if there were time for them to have leave which coincides with the month of Ramadan, they will fast for a full month at home (Hamka, 2017).

The ideology of reform upheld reveals the perspective and aspiration for renewal that developed an influential impact on modern Islamic thought. It betrayed the deep intellectual understanding of modern context and determination and struggle to inspired legal reform in traditional religious understanding and principle, as emphasized by Milhan Yusuf (1995) in his thesis on Hamka's significant legal work:

Having been influenced by the Muslim reformist ideas and championed by Muhammad Abduh and his colleagues, Hamka attempted to disseminate and ameliorate the reform ideas in his country, Indonesia, through the means available to him; that is by preaching and writing...Hamka's conception of the law portrays his challenge and struggle towards the abolishment of taqlid (uncritical acceptance of the decisions made by the predecessors) and the implementation of ijtihad (personal opinion).

Summarizing the concept and ideal of reform espoused by Abduh, Hamka reveals its momentous effect in restoring progressive religious and revivalist cause and reclaiming its rigorous intellectual and scientific tradition in the modern ages:

Sheikh Muhammad Abduh was the first person to pioneer the new (religious) thought. Strictly speaking (is) the young creed (modernist) in Egypt. In English it is written: "The first leader of modern thought in Egypt" (Hamka, 1961).

The scientific and rational approaches in his *Tafsir* was also influenced by the analytical and discursive argument of rationalist and speculative theologians, as

expressed by al-Razi in his tafsir *Mafatih al-ghayb* (Unveiling of the Unseen) or *Tafsir al-Kabir* and hermeneutical impression propounded by al-Zamakhshari in his tafsir *al-Kashshaf 'an haqa'iq ghawamid al-tanzil wa 'uyun al-aqawil fi wujuh al-ta'wil* (unveiling the hidden ambiguity of revelation and the essence of creative vision on the dimension of ta'wil). This impression was described in Hamka's foreword to his *Tafsir*:

We are saying this, since the works of Qur'anic interpretation in Arabic which is known as sources of reliance for most authority, are also known in the direction of the interpreters themselves. Such as Tafsir al-Razi, well-known for its tendency to defend its legal school, namely the Shafiite school. Should one read Tafsir al-Kasysyaaf by Zamakhshari, one can decipher his sympathy for the sect he adhered to, namely the Mu'tazilite (Hamka, 2017).

The spirit of the Qur'an which emphasized on rational inquiry and creative reasoning and critical debates, was clearly brought forth in his *Tafsir* that uphold the scientific and argumentative spirit, and espoused his resolute belief in tauhid (Islamic monotheism) and rational enlightenment. It radically challenged superstitious belief, heresy, and blasphemy, and perverted religious belief and orthodoxy, stagnation and rotten practice of religion, and myopic and insular view based on taqlid. He aspired to striving for conscious revival, and espoused meaningful transformation and reconstruction. A fact reiterated by Wan Sabri Wan Yusof (1997) in his thesis: *Hamka, who was a reformer, also interpreted verses of the Qur'an in the context of his reform ideas in which bid'ah and superstition were the main targets*. His immense effort to driving rational spirit in religious inquiry, lead to independent intellectual investigation of its underlying essence and its foundational spirit and principle, as asserted by Rosnani Hashim (2010):

A visible concern in his Tafsir was the issue of 'aql (mind), rationality and reason. This concern is definitely related to his support of the reformist movement and the neglect of Muslims over the use of reason and their dependence over taqlid.

The reformist (*islah*) approaches have colored his way in defending the force of reason and inspiring his passion for rational arguments and challenging superficial and parochial thinking, emphasizing instead on genuine religious understanding and belief, born of independent spirit in the quest of truth. In his explanation of surah *al-Isra'* verse 36 he remarked:

This verse includes the principle in Muslim character who aspired to uphold his personality. We are forbidden by God to blindly obey. "Obedient" according to Javanese language, by unquestionably submit without probing cause and reason...clearly (indicating) here that a person who only follows in

the footsteps of others, whether his ancestors due to accepted norms and traditions, or rulings and fanatics to one's faction, make one no longer use his own judgement. This in spite of God bestowing on him means of reasoning so that he could relates himself to the world around him. He was given heart, or mind, or intellect to judge bad and good. While hearing and sighting are the linkage between ourselves, or between our heart and with all other things to be judged and considered, its harms and benefits, or the bad and good.

CONCLUSION

In short, this *Tafsir* has highlighted a broad and substantive theme of tafsir in various aspect encompassing ethical, legal, spiritual and rationality. It employed substantive and high level discursive of *ijtihad*, and emphasized momentous and defining ethico-legal arguments and creative hermeneutics. It has contributed to bring new consciousness and understanding of deep-layered meaning and essence of the Qur'an. His interpretation highlights crucial Quranic methodology in its discourse of significant issues relating to intellectual and rational aspects in the manifestations of culture, history, nature, artistic, mystics, legal ruling, philosophy, and tradition. It encapsulates profound theoretical and religious postulates that relates to essential principle and themes in modern history and context. The exposition relates to relevant aspects of religion, culture, politics, history and socio-ethical and moral philosophy with the intended meaning of divine-writ. He crafted a crucial manhaj of *al-adabi al-ijtima'i* (socio-cultural form of exegesis) as significant foundation in his tafsir that aspired to bring momentous change in society. It was a phenomenal work of tafsir, unmatched in modern history that successfully embraced the classical and modern approaches of tafsir [Quranic exegesis] projecting meaningful ideas and striving for constructive reform and higher moral and spiritual ascendancy.

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