

Shihab's Thought Of Hadith: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract

Shihab is a Muslim scholar from the Indonesian Archipelago, who has produced a comprehensive exegesis entitled *Al-Mishbah*. He had stressed on understanding the Qur'anic verses according to the context and not focusing on the text alone. Hence, this study aims to critically analyze on his *Hadith* thought. To get a clearer view, this study has adopted the literature analysis method with *al-Mishbah* as a source inclusive of various *Tafsir* and *Hadith* books as major references. This study found that he emphasized the importance in interpreting the Qur'an with authentic *Hadith*. However, there are instances to strengthen his interpretation by rejecting the authentic *Hadith* and refers to the weak *Hadith*. Additionally, sometimes he rejected the *Hadith* just because his tendency is towards the metaphorical than the real meaning of the verses. Furthermore, there is a *Hadith* which stated just mentioning translation only, causing inconvenience to the public to know its authenticity.

Keywords: Shihab; Exegesis; *Hadith*; Indonesian Archipelago; Thought

Introduction

Tafsir (exegesis) of the Qur'an is the most important science for Muslims. All matters concerning Islamic way of life are connected

to it in one sense or another, since the right application of Islam is based on the proper

understanding of the guidance from Allah. Without *tafsir* there would be no precise understanding of various passages of the Qur'an. There are a number of reasons why *tafsir* is of great importance (Von Denver, 1983), but the basic reason is the following: Allah has sent the Qur'an as a book of guidance to mankind. The purpose of the existence of mankind is to worship Allah, i.e. to seek His pleasure by living the way of life Allah has decreed for him to adopt. He can do so within the framework of the guidance that Allah has revealed, but he can do so only if he properly understands its meanings and implications.

In lieu of this, the Qur'an and *Hadith* (prophetic tradition) have functioned together to shape the life of the community worldwide. *Hadith* provide the basic sources for the biography (sirah) of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), filling in details regarding events mentioned briefly in the Qur'an and providing a wealth of information on the personality, the family, and the career of the Prophet. Also, Muhammad's example in words and deeds, as recorded in the *Hadith*, helps Muslims to interpret the Qur'an by pointing out the circumstances in which portions of Book were revealed, by giving the meanings of obscure verses and words, and by recounting incidents in which the Qur'anic texts were applied to situations in life. As record of the *Sunnah*, or example of the Prophet, the *Hadith* literature is one of the sources of Islamic law (*shariah*) (Okon, 2012). How legal thinking evolved in the community is a complex question, but it is clear that by the early ninth century

C.E. *Hadith* were officially accepted as a basic source of law (Speight, 2009). Many of the collections of *Hadith* are arranged according to the subject matter of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), thus showing that these compilations earlier became the tools of the legal profession. In short, with the increasingly diverse expectations, management practices and skills of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) through his prophetic practices as found in the *Hadith*, contribute to provide the pathway of managing human capital development (Siti Akmar *et al.*, 2011).

Hence, this article elaborates on Hadith thought that tie-up with one of the popular *Tafsir* in Indonesia, namely *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* by Shihab. The elaborations begins with a brief biography to know his persona as an eminent exegete in Indonesia. Followed by critical analysis of two examples of his thought which related with the *Hadith* was used by him to strengthening his argument in Qur'anic exegesis.

Methodology

The research method used in this article is literature review with analytical approach, that is, analysis of Shihab's thought in the field of interpretation, especially in the aspect of Hadith, and followed by reviews and comments. Data collection is the most common method to get data or facts related to the subject of research. The first source is *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* written by Shihab himself. The second source is the books, journals, and other suitable materials. All of these materials are discussed in this article through library research.

Shihab: A Great Indonesian Exegete

Shihab was born in Rappang, South Sulawesi on 16th February 1944. His early education was obtained from his father, Abdulrahman Shihab. His love towards the Qur'an blossomed from the age of six (Shihab, 1992). As a son of a famous exegete, he was often brought by his mother to attend religious classes given by his father. His mother also sparked his interest, as her

constant encouragements and guidance resulted in his decision to further his studies in the same field (Naja, 2007). Other than his parents' early involvements at home, he also studied at Pondok Pesantren Darul Hadith al-Faqihyyah, Malang. Soon after, in 1958 the state of Sulawesi awarded him a scholarship to study at the University of al-Azhar, Cairo, Egypt, and he was accepted to move up to grade two *thanawiyyah* al-Azhar. His academic journey later took him to the Department of Theology, University of al-Azhar majoring in *Tafsir* and *Hadith*. He completed his bachelor degree in 1967. Two years later, in 1969, he managed to obtain a master's degree in the same field (Shihab, 2011).

In 1980, Shihab pursued his Ph.D degree in the same university. He completed his study in two years and obtained a *gradumuntaz ma'a martabah al-sharaf al-ula* (exemplary scholar with outstanding performance). His outstanding results qualified him as the first South East Asian student to obtain a Ph.D degree in Qur'anic sciences from al-Azhar University (Subhan, 1993). Hence, the process of intellectual growth experienced by Shihab for 13 years at the University of al-Azhar shaped his form of thought. In addition, he is also known as a religious figure, educator and he also has his own publication house, Lentera Hati Publisher.

Al-Darraz (1991) has stated that a scholarly work could not escape seven points, namely: a totally new article, completing the incomplete, explaining the vague and difficult, summarizing the long, updating the mixed, purifying the wrong and collecting the scattered. According to Mazlan & Abur (2013) Shihab does all these things well, and even links the limitations which often happen when someone wants to clarify the terms of Islamic scholarship in Arabic into Indonesian language quite successfully. Therefore, there is no doubt that this Indonesian scholar is named a credible and respectable expert in Qur'anic exegesis.

Results and Discussion

Shihab(2010) was very concerned about the importance of *Hadith* in interpreting the Qur'an. An example is when he interprets *Sura Ghafir* (The Forgiver, 40) verse 45 following:

“Then Allah saved him from (every) ill that they plotted (against him), but the brunt of the Penalty encompassed on all sides the People of Pharaoh”.

Shihab(2010) states that the Qur'an does not explain how God Almighty protect and save the believers. In this context, a lot of history that cannot be trusted invalidity and should not be present in the books of *Tafsir*.

Based on this interpretation, he was very emphatic in quotation source and the value of the *Hadith*. This also proves that the function of *Hadith* used by him as an explanation to the verses of the Qur'an. This is a best method instead supported by the words of Allah in *Sura al-Nahl* (The Bee, 26), verse 44 following:

“(We sent them) with Clear Signs and Books of dark prophecies; and We have sent down unto thee (also) the Message; that thou mayest explain clearly to men what sent for them, and that they may give thought”.

In lieu of that, Ibn'Atiyah (2001) states if someone does not find the verse interpretation in another verse, he should refer to the *Sunnah*. Therefore, the exegetes must go deep into the *Hadith* and in sciences, so the *Hadith* used as an argument in the interpretation is sourced from authentic (*Sahih*) or good (*Hasan*), whereas the weak *Hadith* (*da'if*) should not be used as an argument (al-Sabbagh, 1988). Al-Sabt (2001) also mentions a rule that when the interpretation was true from Prophet (pbuh) then there is no need to refer to others. Practically, Ibn Kathir (2000) is one of the great exegetes who supports this rule.

Shihab (2011) has strengthened the rule above

with his assertion that one of the approved rule is it does not contradict with Prophet's interpretation. Therefore, anyone who is expressing an opinion that conflicts with him, then his interpretation is assessed deviant. As for example Shihab's interpretation using an authentic *Hadith* in *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, when interpreting *Sura al-Fath* (The Victory, 48) verse 1 following:

“Verily, We have granted thee a manifest Victory”.

Shihab (2010) states that the scholars have differed over the meaning of *fath*. There are those who understand the victory and dispute the resolution between the Muslims to disbeliever with Hudaibiyah Agreements. There is an understanding that Prophet gained victory when he entered Mecca and conquered it. Sayid Qutb mentioned meanings, starting with the vow made by his companions named *ba'iah al-ridwan*, followed by Hudaibiyah Agreement and other victory shortly afterwards. All opinions above can support by pronouncement of *fatahna*. However, the histories claim that the companions insisted that Hudaibiyah Agreement is meant here. 'Umar RA (at first disagree in some of the details of the agreement Hudaibiyah) after the above revelation, he asked the Prophet (pbuh) "It is called *Fath* (victory) O Messenger of Allah? The Prophet (pbuh) replied, "Yes, for the sake of my soul is in His hand grip, it is *fath*".

However, this study found there are instances when Shihab rejected an authentic *Hadith* evaluated by scholars then referred to weak *Hadith* to strengthen his interpretation. An example is when interpreting *Sura al-Muddaththir* (The Cloaked One, 74) verse 6 following:

“Nor expect, in giving, any increase (for thyself)!”

Shihab (2010) notes that some scholars argue that the sixth verse is not included in the context

(in terms of the revelation's causes) with the earlier verses, because there is a narration that states the last verse of this revelation context is the fifth verse. However, he did not support this opinion, although he admitted the *sanad* (chain of narrators) validity, asserted that the first revelation's context of *Sura Muddaththir* until the fifth verse only. The arguments presented in support of his opinion are three narrations mentioned by al-Bukhari (*Hadith* compiler as the most decisive and accountable interms of narrations). First, the context of al-Muddaththir until the third verse only. Second, until the fourth verse only and third, until the fifth verse only. According to Shihab these narrations are sourced from a companion, Jabir ibn 'Abdillah. Yet some scholars rejected the entire contents of the narrations, stating that the narrations are authentic, but Jabir confused in understanding it. Even more in these narrations Jabir said *Sura al-Muddaththir* is the first revelation down before *Sura al-'Alaq* (The Clot, 96 verses 1 to 5).

Hence, Shihab (2010) tends to make the sixth and seventh verses of this *Sura* are in one context with the preceding verses. This tendency is not only based on al-Tabari's narrations, which clearly states that the first context of *al-Muddaththir* ending by the seventh verse, but the sixth and seventh verses contents are consistent with earlier verses. Both can be evaluated as an indicator for Rasulullah (pbuh) in performing missionary tasks. However, his interpretation should be refined as following:

(a) Author's reference to Hadith al-Bukhari (1980) found two narrations only, namely: The first context of al-Muddaththir until the third and the fifth verses only. This means the narration mentioned by Shihab that the first context until the fourth verse is not true. This finding was also supported by Yasin (1999); (b) Shihab's argument stated that some scholars reject the entire content of Jabir's narration, though it is an authentic narration, but he was confused in understanding it. Unfortunately, based on authors' research this argument should be

refined, because it is not found in any scholars who reject the narration of Jabir. Furthermore, the narration sourced from al-Bukhari recognized by Shihab as a narrator of *Hadith* was most decisive in setting the terms. Based on *takhrij* (verification and authentication of *Hadith*) process conducted by the authors, it was found that a narration cited was entirely valid (al-Albani, 2003). Therefore, Ibn Taimiyyah (1971) states that most *Hadith* listed in the book *al-Jam' al-Sahih* by al-Bukhari and Muslim are valid. In addition, the argument stated that Jabir was confused in understanding whether *al-Muddaththir* was the first revelation before *Sura al-'Alaq* can be adjusted. As Qur'an revelation history proved that there has been a relatively long interval after verse *Iqra'*. At that time, the Prophet (pbuh) did not receive the revelation, thus, Jabir understands that *al-Muddaththir* is the first revelation after the lapse of much time, and not the first before *Iqra'* (al-Albani, 2002); (c) Shihab tends to make the sixth and seventh verses of this *Sura* as in the same context with the preceding verses based on al-Tabarani's narration. This statement should be purified, because the narration is weak (al-Alusi, 1996). Al-Haythami (1992) states in this *sanad* there is Ibrahim ibn Yazid al-Khuzi known as abandoned (*matruk*).

Based on the analysis above, it can be concluded that sometimes Shihab tends to use weak Hadith in interpreting Qur'anic verses. Nevertheless, to get a clearer understanding, Figure 1 illustrates the above points.

However, the authors agree with his interpretation which states that the contents of the sixth and seventh verses are consistent with earlier verses. Both can be evaluated as an indicator for Rasulullah (pbuh) in performing missionary tasks. This is due to the interpretation supported by 'Ashur (1984).

Henceforth, this study also analyzed on Shihab's thought about his rejection of authentic *Hadith*, then interprets Qur'anic verses based on a metaphorical meaning (*majazi*), although

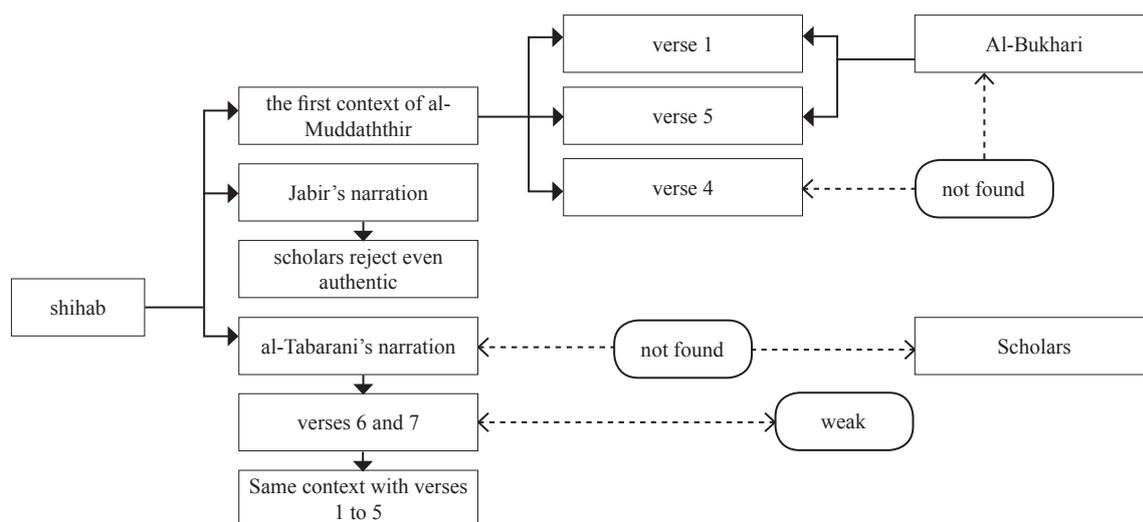


Figure 1 : Purification of Shihab's exegesis in *Sura al-Muddaththir*

it could be understood with its real meaning (*haqiqi*). For example, when he interprets *Sura al-Sharh* (The Relief, 94) verse 1 below:

“Have We not expanded thee thy breast?”

Shihab (2010) refuses to interpret verse 1 above with the Prophet's chest surgery (without need to check the authenticity of *Hadith* narrations), due to the utterance of *sharaha* with various forms was not used by the Qur'an with surgery meaning. Therefore, he interprets metaphorically, i.e. the Prophet's tolerance to accept the truth, wisdom, intelligence and willingness to accommodate even forgiving others. In addition, he cites al-Naysaburi's interpretation stating that this verse discusses the Prophet's chest surgery that has been done by the angels, either during his adult age or a few seconds before *isra' and mi'raj* (the night journey) event. However, his interpretation should refine as following:

(a) Shihab's reference to al-Naysaburi is incomplete, due to al-Naysaburi's interpretation not only that, but al-Naysaburi (1996) tends to interpret the real meaning (chest surgery) by citing narration event. This conclusion can be proved by complete al-Naysaburi's interpretation that Prophet's chest surgery was included in *al-irhas* (the events that occur outside the habit of proving dispatch on Prophet

(pbuh) before he was sent) and the power of God to do whatever He wills. Thus, he makes this event as evidence that Angel knows Prophet's immunity from offences. Theoretically, Sa'id (1995) also supports this interpretation; (b) The scholars' reminder is to give priority to the real meaning than the metaphor. In this vein, Al-Buti (1996) asserts that the Prophet chest surgery was reported with an authentic path, the companions, such as Anas ibn Malik (ra). Al-Buti (1996) said that our acceptance scales to any narration based on the true and authentic narration. Once upon clearly, it cannot be rejected. Our next consideration is based on the meaning of language and Islamic law. However, the Qur'anic utterances must be checked based on the real meaning, if still be forced to understand metaphorically without evidence (*qarinah*), surely undermine and destroy the Qur'anic Arabic language and finally make it difficult to be understood. Therefore, those who do not believe in Prophet's chest surgery narration with real meaning has shown their weakness in faith to Allah and Rasulullah's prophethood. If not so, they would receive all the authentic narration whether known as the secrets or not.

Based on the reminder above, Shihab should tend to interpret with the real meaning, because the matter was implicitly admitted, as the utterance of *sharaha* has two meanings, real

and metaphor. Furthermore, the Qur'anic verses and the Hadith of Rasulullah (pbuh) according to 'Abd al-Bar (1996) should be interpreted with real meaning. Thus, al-Harabi (1996) mentions a rule of interpretation, shows if scholars have a difference in opinion about the meaning of the verse, among them, it has to be interpreted based on real meaning or metaphor, and then the correct choice to be followed is based on the real meaning.

In lieu of that, al-Jawziyyah (1996) asserts four important things if the Qur'an is to be interpreted based on the real or metaphor meaning, namely: Firstly, explaining that the verse is unable to be interpreted with real meaning. Secondly, explaining the accuracy of the verse meaning if interpreted according to the metaphor. Thirdly, stating argument that the verse could not be understood according to the real meaning. Fourthly, mentioning the supporting argument that the verse must be understood with metaphor meaning. If the event is unable to offer the four things, then at least an argument can be stated as mentioned in the third and fourth; (c)The *takhrij* process found that the value of the Prophet (pbuh) chest surgery narration was authentic, as narrated by al-Bukhari (1980) in his *al-Jami' al-Sahih*, *hadith* number 3887. Similarly, by Muslim (2000) in *al-Jami' al-Sahih*, *hadith* number 434 and also Ahmad (1999) in *Musnad*. Furthermore, this *Hadith* has been asserted by many exegetes, such as Ibn Kathir (2000), al-Suyuti (2003), al-Tabari (2001) and al-Qurtubi (2003) in their Books. Theoretically, to get a clearer view, Figure 2 illustrates the three points above.

Based on the analysis above, it can be concluded that sometimes Shihab tends to reject an authentic *Hadith* and interpret the Qur'anic verses based on metaphorical meaning without any evidence to support his arguments, and its failure based on scholars and exegetes reminder.

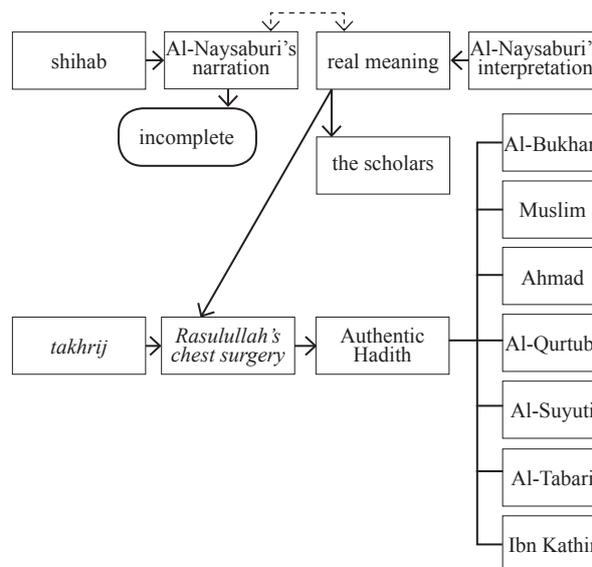


Figure 2 : Purification of Shihab's thought about Rasulullah's chest surgery event

Conclusion

Shihab highly emphasizes the usage of authentic *Hadith* in interpreting the Qur'an. However, to strengthen his interpretation sometimes he rejects authentic *Hadith* evaluated by scholars and refers to weak *Hadith* as shown in *Sura al-Muddaththir* verse 6. He tends to make the sixth and seventh verses of this Sura as one context with the preceding verses based on al-Tabarani's narration. However, this study found the narration value of this *hadith* is weak. Other than that, sometimes Shihab rejects an authentic *Hadith* just because of his tendency to apply metaphor instead of the real meaning of the verse. For example, when interpreting *Sura al-Sharh* verse 1. He interprets this verse does not mean Prophet's chest surgery, but is used metaphorically, which discusses the toleration that can produce the ability to receive and seek the truth, wisdom, intelligence and willingness to forgive others. These meanings were based on what he understood from al-Naysaburi's interpretation. Unfortunately, al-Naysaburi interpreted the verse with real meaning, or Rasulullah's chest surgery. Additionally, this meaning is supported by Sa'id Hawa also. Furthermore, the value of Prophet's chest surgery event is authentic.

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