Defamation by Women Mentioned in Surah Yusuf According to Hamka: A Review

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Abstract
Many of the contemporary social and criminal problems are due to the defamation of women. This has been emphasised in the al-Qur’an and Hadith, especially about the dangers of women defaming men. The Prophet PBUH iterated, “I have not left behind me any fitnah (temptation) more harmful to men than women” (al-Tirmidhi). The Al-Quran had proven this through the narrative about Prophet Yusuf PBUH, who faced defamation after being seduced by Zulaikha. Hence, this working paper had identified the issue of defamation by women that exists in Surah Yusuf besides analysing the HAMKA interpretation pertaining to this issue. This study had employed the qualitative design involving library research. Therefore, the source of the primary data was the al-Azhar Interpretation text, which was considered a case study. Data in this study were analysed using the thematic method by gathering verses of the al-Qur’an related to Prophet Yusuf PBUH and Zulaikha according to a specific theme based on the HAMKA interpretations. Initial examinations found that the issue of defamation by women contained in Surah Yusuf referred to the seduction by Zulaikha due to sexual desires (hawa nafsu) because she was totally in love with Prophet Yusuf PBUH and possessed an immoral attitude prevalent among all the urban women at that time.

Keywords: Defamation of Woman, Zulaikha, Narrative about Prophets, Yusuf PBUH, HAMKA.

Introduction
Islam recognises the existence of women on this earth as well as the existence of men and there is absolutely no discrimination, gender bias, second class issues etc. expressed towards women (Hafiz & Rohaya, 2010). Hence, women play an important role in society such as building a future generation of esteemed leaders and Islamic advocates and this process begins at home. A Muslim woman could not possibly build a strong family except by being a true Muslimah who is nurtured from a religious aspect, strongly upholds Almighty Allah’s scriptures as well as the sunnah of Prophet Peace and Blessing Be Upon Him (PBUH) (Majdi, 2001). On the other hand, women could also become a form of defamation (as a test or challenge) when their presence makes men neglect their obligations to Almighty Allah (Nurdin & Rufika, 2014).

The Prophet Muhammad PBUH had narrated numerous instances that went awry because women were not made a lesson off or the outcome of their actions taken as a form of advice for those who were pious (al-Sa’di, n.d.). This was proven by cases of women in the past, such as Walihah, the wife of Prophet Luth PBUH, as a symbol of treachery by a wife; Unaizah, as a
symbol of slyness and opposition offered by Bani Hawa against the preachings of Prophet Saleh PBUH. Besides that, Zulaikha, the wife of a dignitary from Egypt, was a symbol of seduction towards Prophet Yusuf PBUH, whereas Dalilah as the conquerer of Prophet Samson, Jeridah as the woman who defeated Prophet Soloman and Bal’am, whose wife had caused his Prophethood to be withdrawn (Niasato, 2012; Misbah 2010).

Therefore, this study had tried to examine the issue of defamation that exist in Surah Yusuf. Hence, the main issue in this case is that Zulaikha had deceived Prophet Yusuf PBUH through words and actions that are explained in several related verses in the al-Qur’an.

The Background of Surah Yusuf
Surah Yusuf is the twelfth (12) verse in the order of verses in the al-Qur’an. This surah contains a hundred and eleven (111) verses and belongs to the group of Makkiiyah surah. Almighty Allah had specifically iterated the case of Prophet Yusuf PBUH in this surah, whereas besides this surah Prophet Yusuf’s PBUH name is only mentioned twice, namely in Surah al-An’am verse 84 and Surah Ghafir verse 34 (al-Sabuni, 1996). The case of Prophet Yusuf PBUH is an admirable story (Zulkarnain, 2003), as explained early in Surah Yusuf;

“We tell you the best story by delivering this al-Qur’an to you, and verily you before this, included among those who are unaware”.

According to religious scholars, “the best story” in this verse refers to the difference in Prophet Yusuf’s PBUH story that has numerous examples and wisdom compared to stories about other Prophets before him. Prophet Yusuf PBUH is portrayed as being very patient and wise, which is far better compared to all his relatives. It also states about noble people such as fellow Prophets and pious people, besides every character in the story, aimed to seek happiness (Bahjat, 2008).

Pertaining to these stories about Prophet Yusuf PBUH, Almighty Allah has shown that being patient yields favourable consequences such as providing comfort after suffering. Almighty Allah had tested Prophet Ya’qub PBUH when HE took his son away, Yusof PBUH, when he lost his sight, the perseverance and patients of Yusuf PBUH by separating him from his parents, thrown into a pit and traded as a slave. Then Almighty Allah tested his faith by subjecting him to the seduction of a beautiful woman among the arictocratic women at that time until he landed in jail. Later, Almighty Allah freed Yusuf PBUH and his father from all sufferage and tests until they met each other and Ya’qub PBUH got back his sight (Departmen Agama Republik Indonesia, 1989).

THE DEBATE ABOUT DEFAMATION

Fitnah (defamation) in Arabic means, characteristically something to burn, which refers to metals such as gold or silver, with the aim of obtaining its by-products (al-FayruzAbadi, 2000).
The root word of fitnah is fatana, whereas in a verbal noun (masdar) form it originates from the word fatana, yaftinu, fatnan or fitnatan, meaning to entice, seduce, cajole, to go astray, burn and obstruct. Among the physical forms of fitnah covers the husband, wife, children, property, women and idolatry. Meanwhile, from a non-physical sense it refers to cheating, Satan, death, rank/position/ comfort, social elements, punishment etc. (al-Razi, 2003). Fitnah, in this study, refers to trials and tests in life (Ibn Manzur, n.d; al-Isfahani, n.d; al-Husayn, 1994) through the seduction of women that occurred between Yusuf PBUH and Zulaikha. Some of the issues identified are as follows:

**Issue of the Seduction of Women**

In the Bible, Zulaikha is said to the wife of Porthipar and is crazy about Yusuf PBUH and seduces him in order to do the forbidden but Joseph rejects her (Zulkarnain, 2003). In the al-Quran, the story of Prophet Yusuf PBUH clearly shows that a woman named Zulaikha had tested Yusuf PBUH, who was a Prophet and a Messenger of Almighty Allah (Masykur, 2014). This is explained in the following verse (Quran, Yusuf: 23):

“And she, in whose house he was, sought to seduce him. She closed the doors and said, ‘Come, you.’ He said, ‘[I seek] the refuge of Allah. Indeed, he is my master, who has made good my residence. Indeed, wrongdoers will not succeed.’

This verse explains that the word râwada originated from the word râda, which means the ability to ask for something in a delicate or polite manner with the hope of obtaining it. The word râwadathu means ‘seduce to make the other succumb’. In this case, the seducer was an adult woman, Zulaikha, while the seduced was an adult man who just reached maturity, namely Yusuf PBUH. This shows the existence of the element of cajoling or seduction in her efforts. This element is further strengthened by the word ‘an nafsihî’, which means to make Yusuf PBUH succumb (Muhammad Akrom, 2014). For example, if Yusuf PBUH was at home, Zulaikha would always look presentable, wear perfume, parade and behave by exposing her ‘aurat’ as if it was not intentional so that Yusuf PBUH would be sexually stimulated (Setia, 2014).

Besides that, the ulama specialising in interpretation had discussed in detail words such as “hamma”, “hammat bihi” and “hammat biha” found in the following verse (Quran, Yusuf: 24):

“And she certainly determined [to seduce] him, and he would have inclined to her had he not seen the proof of his Lord. And thus [it was] that We should avert from him evil and immorality. Indeed, he was of Our chosen servants”.

This verse does not show that Prophet Yusuf PBUH had bad intentions towards women (Zulaikha), but the seduction was so intense that if he was not strengthened by the faith towards Almighty Allah then surely He would be involved in vice. The word means ‘earnestly wanting something between the two’. According to Ibnu Kathir’s interpretations (1401H), Al-
Baghawi was of the opinion, that the word “hammabiha” indicated words with intense sexual connotations. Hence, according to this interpretation, there exist a desire by both parties, either Zulaikha or Yusuf PBUH. Moreover, Rida (n.d.) in *Tafsir al-Manar*, had also supported the views of Ibn Hazm and other *mufassir* that there are several *hamma* words with meanings like ‘to hit’, ‘betray’ or ‘bad intentions’ and ‘selfish in attitude’. Hence, al-Baghawi (n.d.) strengthened his opinion by saying that *hamma biha* means a turbulent state of mind that has yet to be transformed into reality. This shows that Yusuf’s PBUH feelings towards Zulaikha were in a tumultuous state but he managed to control himself by envisioning the power of Allah based on the education he received when small and the protection afforded by Almighty Allah right until he was safe. Many interpreters are of the opinion that Yusuf PBUH was overly excited upon seeing Zulaikha but Almighty Allah had protected him so that he would become a Prophet who is *ma’sum* (protected from vice). Previous studies have supported al-Baghawi’s views because it had considered the psychological and biological aspects. This means that although Yusuf PBUH was sexually excited due to Zulaikha’s pleadings and he had biological desires as a man; thus, it did not reduce the *ma’sum* features of Yusuf PBUH (Kalam Setia, 2014).

Next, efforts to make Yusuf PBUH succumb are evident in the words ‘wa ghallaqat al-abwâb’ and ‘wa qâlat haita laka’, which shows that the efforts were not just verbal pleadings but also included actions such as closing shut the door and ensuring it was locked. Use of the word ‘ghallaqat’, which results from the word *ghalaqa* (close), shows a repeated activity, whereas the word *abwâb* in plural form means doors. This shows that Zulaikha had repeatedly closed the doors, first by securely closing all the doors and again ensuring all the doors were properly closed. Besides that, the conversation between Zulaikha and Yusuf PBUH got clearer after Zulaikha said ‘haita laka’. The word *haita* means ‘come here’, while the word ‘laka’ emphasises that the invitation was intended for the person across the room. The conversation that took place between the two indicated that the house was quiet or only both of them were in the house. These were the efforts of Zulaikha aimed at seducing Yusuf PBUH, which was by closing all the doors and uttering those stimulating words because she had fallen for the handsome Yusuf PBUH (Akrom, 2014; Misbah 2010).

**Issue about Blind Love**

The issue of blind love can be found in the verse below (Quran, Yusuf: 30):

> "And women in the city said, "The wife of al-'Azeez is seeking to seduce her slave boy; he has impassioned her with love. Indeed, we see her [to be] in clear error."

The exclamation ‘*shaghafahâ hubban*’ refers to a form of love that is specific, which is an intense burning love. This is the epitome of a person’s loving feeling so much so that one is totally inclined to control the person so loved. This means that Zulaikha’s love was so intense and over-bearing towards Yusuf PBUH so much so that she acted aggressively to do something that was prohibited by religion (Akrom, 2014; Masykur, 2014; M.Quraish, 2002). Hence, the saga of Yusuf PBUH and Zulaikha had highlighted an epic love story that overcame all obstacles.
and challenges so much so that it costs a life just to be together with a lover (Zulkarnain, 2003; Dols 1992).

The attractiveness and love felt by Zulaikha towards Yusuf PBUH blossomed because they both lived in the same house and saw each other every other day. Zulaikha had always observed and watched Yusuf PBUH growing up until he became of perfect man. Besides that, Zulaikha had not had sexual contact with her husband for a long time as he was impotent (M.Quraish, 2001). Moreover, another contributing factor was that Yusuf PBUH was handsome, had good character and carried himself well beyond compare and this surely attracted every woman he met (Akrom, 2014; Sakinah, 2011; Masykur 2014; Setia 2014). In one hadith, the Prophet Muhammad PBUH said, “I met Yusuf. Verily, he possesses half the beauty of this world” (Muslim, 429). Zulaikha was seen as losing her mind over her love with Yusuf PBUH so much so that she was willing to accuse him and cause him to be jailed for years (Zulkarnain, 2003). Zulaikha’s love for Yusuf PBUH was seen as aggressive as it fulfilled her sexual desires and neglected the norms and limits that safeguarded the sanctity of love (M.Quraish, 2001; Masykur, 2014)

**Issue about Satan’s Whispers**

Yusuf PBUH was seduced by Zulaikha through Satan, who resides in every human being (nafs ammarah bissu’) or the whispers of Satan that promises pleasure, which then makes one become increasing daring to commit evil deeds (Masykur, 2014; Fazlur, 1995). It was easy for Satan to entice Zulaikha’s sexual desire since she had yet to possess a strong faith and piousness at that time. As a normal woman, surely, she would like to express her sexual desires to the handsome looking Yusuf PBUH (Shirazi, 2005).

Hence, the incident concerning the tearing of Prophet Yusuf’s PBUH shirt reveals Zulaikha’s inability to curb her sexual desires. She, without any shame or being bashful as well as being a respected wife, was cheated by Satan, whereby what was abhorred was seen as something beautiful and what was comforting was actually fallacious (Masykur, 2014).

**Issue about Moral Decay**

The immoral invitation to approach Zulaikha was strongly opposed by Yusuf PBUH and he sought the protection of Almighty Allah (Misbah, 2010). Whereas, Zulaikha was portrayed as experiencing emotional stress when her actions towards Yusuf PBUH became known to the town and the women in the palace in Egypt (Zulkarnain, 2003). After the news of the scandal spread, it became the talk of women in Egypt, especially among the rich and elite women as well as fellow dignitaries in Egypt. Zulaikha was defamed and ridiculed with mockery, which eventually degraded her because she seduced and fell in love with her step-son whom she brought up since he was a child; like a slave who is not in par with the master (Akrom, 2014; Misbah, 2010).
Hence, repeatedly and unconsciously self-inflicting cuts on the fingers reflects the attitude of Egyptian women who were overly awestricken by seeing the good-looking and handsome Yusuf PBUH. They were charmed and trance-like when saying that Yusuf PBUH was not an ordinary man but a noble angel. The actions of women to seduce and usurp Yusuf PBUH proves that they were easily seduced by the good-looks of someone, easily lead astray when confronted with earthly pleasures and this signals the corrupted moral values of the Egyptian society at that time (Masykur, 2014). This plot also shows the beauty of the language and the contents of the story regarding Yusuf PBUH (Zulkarnain, 2003; Muhammad Akrom, 2014).

After that incident, Zulaikha admitted that she pleaded and seduced Yusuf PBUH so that he would condescend to her but Yusuf PBUH rejected her pleas. She herself presumed that Yusuf’s PBUH attractiveness was acceptable because other Egyptian women also had similar feelings and intentions. She benefitted by this situation by allowing herself to condescend to Yusuf PBUH when she fell in love and seduced him so that she would not be blamed eventually (M.Quraish, 2001). Besides that, she had also threatened to imprison Yusuf PBUH if he rejected her overtures (Muhammad Akrom, 2014; Misbah 2010). However, at that time, the truth only sided with those in power and those who were part a corrupted justice system (Masykur, 2014). The government dignitaries had also thought of imprisoning Yusuf AS in order to safeguard the secret regarding the immorality of al-Aziz’s wife so that her behaviour did not become the talk of society as well as to clear her good family name, which would have the people lay trust in the leadership (M.Quraish 2001; HAMKA 1988).

**Issue about a Woman’s Deceit**

This is mentioned in the following verse (Quran, Yusuf: 28):

“So, when her husband saw his shirt torn from the back, he said, "Indeed, it is of the women’s plan. Indeed, your plan is great.

Zulaikha had lied to her husband and defamed Yusuf PBUH, which caused him to be imprisoned. Yusuf PBUH heard the false report and accusations made by Zulaikha to her husband but could not do anything except give the actual account of what occurred (Kalam Setia, 2014). However, when Zulaikha’s husband saw that Yusuf’s PBUH shirt was torn from behind, he knew that his wife had lied to him (Sakinah, 2011; Masykur 2014) and Almighty Allah had protected Yusuf PBUH from those evil deeds and deception (Misbah, 2010; Sakinah, 2011).

**AN ANALYSIS OF ISSUES ACCORDING TO THE THINKING OF HAMKA**

HAMKA had commented on the verses pertaining to Yusuf PBUH and Zulaikha by separating it into three themes, such as:
Yusuf PBUH was pleaded upon by a beautiful woman

According to HAMKA, Yusuf PBUH faced three big influences that had both, positive and negative elements in them. The positive influence was that he would become a Prophet and Messenger as well as a government dignitary. Whereas the negative influence was that the Regent’s wife, who became his step-mother later, had fallen in love with him. The Regent’s wife had witnessed the active development of this child since he was 12 years old until he became an adult and later developed sexual desires on seeing the ever-handsome adolescent. Religious scholars are uncertain about the age of Yusuf PBUH at that time, as to whether he was 33, 30, 20, 40, or 18 years old. Therefore, in verse 23, it says that the Regent’s wife could not control herself and she then pleaded with Yusuf PBUH to fulfil her sexual desires. HAMKA (1993) stated that probably the way she pleaded was by exposing a part of her that stimulates the sexual desire in a man followed by her saying “haita laka” (come here you).

Next, verse 25 shows that Yusuf PBUH and Zulaikha ran towards the door but all the doors and windows were already closed by Zulaikha. Yusuf’s PBUH shirt was pulled from behind until it tore so that he would obey her wishes. Zulaikha also did something deceitful when she wanted to clear her name when her husband appeared at the door. Zulaikha was attracted to Yusuf PBUH mainly because al-Aziz had an impaired libido and had become impotent or a castrate (HAMKA, 1993).

Hence, this shows that Zulaikha had pleaded with Yusuf PBUH in numerous ways because her mind was influenced by sexual desires.

Tongue-Swaging Women

This theme is related to how the elite society was portrayed during ancient Egypt, in which the wives of dignitaries often met and entertained themselves while in conversation about wealth, clothing, luxury, cosmetics, decoration etc. Hence, rumours about wives of dignitaries seducing young men had become a talking point among these women and raised issues about spite, negative impressions and accusations towards Zulikha. The hypocrisy and insincerity raised by the dignitary’s’ wives were like as if they had done no wrong.

However, Zulaikha was a clever woman as she did not distant herself or despises the women who criticised or disdained her good name but rather invited them to her beautiful palace to look at Yusuf PBUH. All the women were so enthralled and awed that they did not even realise that they had cut their fingers while cutting something because they were so focused and in a trance-like state when looking at Yusuf PBUH and talking about his charm. Moreover, if they had not thought of the humility and nobility of God, surely, they would have lost control and embraced Yusuf PBUH.

Thus, the attitude of elite women in Egypt those days showed moral decay as they were inclined to be pessimistic, accuse falsely and easily become conceited.
Sexual Desire (Hawa Nafsu)

The honest confession by Zulaikha that she had erred and not Yusuf PBUH was when she said, “I had actually erred because I had surrendered to my sexual desires (hawa nafsu). I could not control myself so much so I begged Yusuf, I called him, I invited him to do something unworthy with me. The house was closed and nobody was at home, my husband was not in the house, he was handsome and attractive, he was young and I was young too. Because, verily, lust leads to vice”

HAMKA explained that by this confession and admission, we get to study the human soul pertaining to nafs ammarah, which is sexual desire, gluttony (syahwat perut) and female sexual lust (syahwat faraj), that cannot be separated at all in a human as long as the human lives.

CONCLUSION

The defamation by women mentioned in Surah Yusuf evolves around the pleading and seduction of Zulaikha through her words and actions. Besides that, the attitude of urban women in Egypt at that time showed corrupted moral values among the society there. HAMKA had divided the issues in the Surah into three themes, namely a beautiful woman pleading to Yusuf PBUH, tongue-swaging women and sexual desires, in order to explain in detail, the meaning of the verses related to Yusuf PBUH and Zulaikha so that it is easily understood by all levels of society.

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