

Assessing the Thoughts of Syeikh Muhammad Said Umar Regarding Characteristic Verses in Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan

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Abstract

Islamic Scholars in the archipelago, especially Malaysia, Indonesia, and Southern Thailand, have been active in producing works in various fields of Islamic studies. These fields are fiqh, belief, Sufism, hadith, and interpretation of the Quran. One of the works written in the field of al-Quran interpretation is Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan produced by Syeikh Muhammad Said Umar. This work in the field of al-Quran interpretation has become a reading material as well as a reference for the public in understanding the content of the Quran. The greatness of the Nusantara scholars is reflected in Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan which contains many scientific facts such as discussions about the reasons for the revelation of the verses of the Quran, the stories of the previous people, the advantages of surahs and verses of the Quran, as well as debates about the Characteristic Verses. However, the facts as stated were not studied and analyzed in detail by the researchers. Therefore, this study was conducted to examine and identify one of the scientific facts in Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan, which is the thoughts of Syeikh Muhammad Said Umar. about the Characteristic Verses. In carrying out this research, the researcher applied the content analysis method and library research to analyze and reveal the matter. It is hoped that after this study is completed it will be able to provide new knowledge to the community about the content of Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan in addition to being able to dignify this work in comparison to other authoritative works.

Keywords: Syeikh Muhammad Said Umar, Thoughts, the Characteristic Verses, Textual Studies, Evaluation, Tafsir Nur Al-Ihsan

introduction

The 17th century AD is an important phase in the development and dissemination of Islamic knowledge especially in the field of Quranic interpretation. This is due to the appearance of a scholar who produced an interpretive work entitled *Tafsir Tarjuman al-Mustafid*. He is al-Fansuri, A. R., a Malay scholar from Aceh, Indonesia. *Tafsir Tarjuman al-Mustafid* is a work that complements the description of 30 constituents of the verses of the Quran in Malay. This

work continues to evolve in terms of usage and reference to it by the Muslim Malay community, especially in the archipelago (Wan Nasyrudin, 2008). In the 19th century AD, a Malay scholar from Kedah took the same step in producing a work in the field of interpretation of the Quran complete by 30 constituents. The work, titled *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*, was authored by Umar, M.S. This work is not only read by the public but also serves as the main reference of the Malay community in understanding the contents of the Quran (Sholeh, 2021a). To date, this work continues to be used as a teaching and learning material in educational institutions especially in huts and mosques throughout Malaysia (Mohd Sholeh, 2021b). However, according to some researchers, Syeikh Muhammad Said Umar who is the author of *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* did not clearly state the reference notes of every fact that he contained in his work. This causes some readers to become skeptical of every fact contained in it (Zaim, 2010). The writing of this work has a downside because there is a lack of a writing style that does not state the source of factual reference according to some researchers the author of this work uses many unfounded opinions in its interpretation (Zaim, 2010). The stories in this work are also dubious because the author does not describe the reference source in detail. Therefore, society needs to be careful when reading and referencing this work (Taib, 2003).

Referring to the importance of *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan's* work as it is still and continues to be a public reading and reference material, efforts to purify this work should be made (Yusuff, 2020). One of the forms of this effort is through research using a content analysis method that will examine the information and content of *Tafsir Nur Ihsan* such as the reason for the descent of the verses of the Quran, the fadilat of surah and verses of the Quran, the stories of the previous people, the fiqh and faith debates as well as the verses of the nature. Therefore, this study is focused on one of the aspects contained in *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* which is the debate on adjective verses as one of the initial efforts to complete this *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* and as an example of applying the method of content analysis to works in the field of Quranic interpretation, especially *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*, which in turn can be developed in other parts that will certainly contribute towards the completeness of this work.

Al-Mutashabihat

According to al-Nabhan, M. F., verse *al-Mutashabihat* has various meanings. Among them are; every verse known only to Allah SWT about the fact is that such as the events of the Day of Resurrection, the state of Dajjal, and the letters *al-Muqatta'ah* which are the pieces of letters that are at the beginning of surah, each verse that has an unambiguous meaning such as the verses of Allah SWT, which have many meanings, which have an unacceptable meaning of reason, which need to be referred to other verses to understand it and which are repeated (Al-Nabhan, 2005). Itr (1996) states that *al-Mutashabihat* is a verses of the Quran that have hidden meanings that cannot be understood by the minds of men. Although there are many meanings regarding the verse of *al-Mutashabihat*, Syeikh Muhammad Said Umar is more inclined towards the opinion which states that *al-Mutashabihat* is the letters of *al-Muqatta'ah* found at the beginning of surah as stated by al-Ghazali (n.d) in his work titled *al-Mustafa min Ilm al-Motion*. Umar (1970) explained about *al-Mutashabihat* through his record

"Half of them are some verses of the law that remain clear, they are the mother of the original book which is held in all the rulings, and some other verses that are

syubhah are not understood to mean by accusing like all the early rumuzs of surah".

The author concludes that the verses of the Quran are divided into two parts which are verses that are clear in meaning (al-Muhkamat) and verses that are not understood to mean (al-Mutashabihat) which are the letters al-Muqatta'ah which are *pieces of letters found at the beginning of surah such as Nun and Yasin*. Concerning the Characteristic Verses, he did not consider it as *al-Mutashabihat* based on the interpretation made. Adjectives mean every verse that in its appearance indicates the attributes possessed by Allah SWT that resemble the nature of a creature (Itr, 1996). This statement is evidenced by the argument asserted by Umar (1970) that the verse of al-Mutashabihat *cannot be obliterated because its meaning is known only to Allah SWT and al-Mutashabihat which is meant to be the letters al-Muqatta'ah at the beginning of surah*.

Discussion

In interpreting the verses of nature, the author uses two approaches which are interpretations based on the opinions of Salaf scholars and Khalaf scholars. Al-Hasani (1996) explained that the *Khalaf* scholars refer to scholars who came after the 500th year of Hijrah, while *the Salaf* came before that. Salaf scholars *take the approach of not deciphering the verses of this nature compared to the Khalaf* which takes the opposite approach (Al-Hasani, 1996). According to Al-Sya'rawi (1991); Al-Nasafi (1999), both opinions are true and coincide with the Islamic faith, and are accepted according to the perspective of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jam'ah*.

Based on research on the content of *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*, this study divides the interpretation of the verses into two categories, namely interpretation according to the opinion of Salaf scholars and interpretation according to Khalaf scholars. This can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Interpretation of Syeikh Muhammad Said Umar on the Characteristic Verses in Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan

Bill	Volume	Page	Tafsir Text	Salaf	Khalaf
01	1	12	<i>Thumma istawa ila al-sama'</i> , Then towards it to the heavens then be it will be them		√
02	1	181	<i>Walladhi nafsi bi yadihi</i> , For my sake with his qudrat		√
03	1	233	And said the Jews: the hand of God is shackled with chains	√	
04	1	233	But the two hands of God are open to both	√	
05	2	15	Requiring the face of Allah alone with their worship	√	
06	2	20	He said: <i>a'udhu bi wajhika</i> I ask to take refuge with Your face O My Lord	√	

07	2	70	<i>Thumma istawa 'ala al-'Arsy,</i> then rule It over the Throne		√
08	2	179	<i>Thumma istawa 'ala al-'Arsy,</i> then the equivalent of it upon the Throne will be as equal as it is worthy of Him	√	
09	2	270	And all those who are patient for demanding the reward for the face of their Lord	√	
10	3	12	Wanting them only for God's face	√	
11	3	116	Say by you who with His hand belongs to everyone	√	
12	3	150	Then the equivalent of the Throne by the Lord al-Rahman will be as the equivalent of the worthy of Him	√	
13	3	214	<i>Kullu syai' halikun illa wajhah;</i> everyone perished except Allah		√
14	3	237	<i>Yuridun wajhallah;</i> The beginning of that is better the reward of heaven for all those who wish for Allah alone with His worship.		√
15	3	237	You will with him the face of Allah alone	√	
16	3	250	Then He sits on the Throne, which is the seat of the kingdom, as a worthy equivalent to Him	√	
17	3	339	His Word O Devil what prevents thee that thou prostrate for the things which I have become with My Hand which is Adam	√	
18	3	354	And the seventh earth is in His grasp on the Day of Resurrection, in His possession and His Qudrah.		√
19	3	354	And the seven rolled heavens gather with His Right Hand, which is the state of Allah SWT into the heavens of the earth and the destruction of the two days of the		√

			Resurrection, pointing upon the perfect Kudrat of Allah.		
20	4	128	So that thou art before Our Eyes	√	
21	4	156	Then the equivalent of It on the Throne of the seat will be equal to the worthy of Him	√	
22	4	164	And that the grace is with the Hand of Allah.	√	
23	4	206	Glory be to Allah from the weak nature that He rules with His Hand	√	
24	4	243	We only feed you for the Face of God alone	√	
25	4	280	<i>Wa ja'a Rabbuka</i> ; and come by the command of thy Lord		√
26	4	286	For demanding the pleasure of the face of Allah, the Highest Lord.	√	
Total		26		18	8
Per cent		100%		69.2%	30.8%

Based on table 1 above, 26 verses of the Quran are classified as verses. The above table also explains Syeikh Muhammad Said Umar when interpreting the Verses using two opinions of scholars which are the opinion of Salaf scholars *and the opinion of Khalaf scholars*. There are 18 verses which 69.2% are based on the interpretation of *Salaf scholars*, while 8 verses representing 30.8% refer to the interpretation of *Khalaf scholars*.

The interpretation of the verse based on the opinion of *the scholars of Khalaf* can be seen when the author of *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*, Syeikh Muhammad Said Umar interprets the verses of the Quran regarding the attributes or circumstances of Allah SWT which are revealed to match the nature and condition of His creation. Syeikh Muhammad Said Umar took the approach of interpreting these verses for other purposes worthy of Allah SWT.

At number 01 according to Table 1 above, Syeikh Muhammad Said Umar recites *the word istawa with the meaning of wish which is to create the sky*, number 02 is the word of Allah's hand to the power of Allah, number 07 is the word istawa with the meaning of ruling, the number 13 words of Allah's face is professed with the substance of Allah, the number 14 words of Allah's face is also professed with Allah.

Number 18 through the table above Syeikh Muhammad Said Umar declares the word of Allah's hand to Allah's possession, the number 19 words of Allah's right hand are enshrined by the power of Allah, and the number 25 words of Allah have come to be covered by the coming of Allah's messenger.

On the other hand, the interpretation of the verse based on the approach of *the ulama salaf* is identified when the author does not interpret the meaning of the verses to another worthy

meaning and follows the Quran SWT. Although Syeikh Muhammad Said Umar when interpreting the verses of this nature uses the approach of Salaf scholars who seem to equate Allah SWT with His creatures like having faces and hands, it is not really what he said. This is because the *scholars* of Salaf also firmly believe that the situation of Allah SWT does not match all of His teachings even though their interpretation seems to equate the situation of Allah SWT with the teachings. According to the opinion of the scholars of the salaf, although Allah SWT has hands or faces, the condition of the hands of Allah and His face is not equal to anyone or anything. Blessed is Allah from all shortcomings, there is nothing comparable to Allah SWT.

The application of the interpretation of the verses based on the approach of *the salaf* scholars can be seen at number 03 where it is stated that Allah has a hand (the hand of Allah is shackled with a chain that is stingy according to the Jews), number 04 Allah has two hands (two hands of Allah are open to provide sustenance), numbers 05, 06, 09, 10 and 15 Allah has a face (the worship of the believers is because of Allah alone and asks for protection from Him), Numbers 08, 12, 16 and 21 Allah resides on Thrones, numbers 11 and 17 Allah has a hand that dominates all His creation.

Number 20 based on Table 1 above shows that Allah SWT has eyes, number 22 Allah has a hand that bestows His mercy on whom He wills, number 23 Allah has a hand that punishes whoever is guilty, number 24 and 26 Allah has a face (alms and good deeds of the believers only because of Allah).

Conclusion

Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan is a work of interpretation produced by Syeikh Muhammad Said Umar. This work is widely received not only in Malaysia but also in Malaysia, Egypt, and Thailand on par with other contemporary interpretations. What is interesting about this work is that its simple style of presentation is even easy to understand by the community and is also loaded with various sciences. Its simple language style can meet the needs of all levels of society and is suitable for use by modern civil societies such as Malaysia.

Based on the research and analysis done, this study found that Syeikh Muhammad Said Umar deliberately celebrates both the opinions and approaches of the scholars of the salaf and *khalaf*. He did so to inform the community that both approaches are acceptable and can be held as long as the society adheres to and believes that Allah SWT does not equal all His creatures either in terms of substances or properties. He did so due to the state of the society due to the differing opinions and opinions on the interpretation of verses of this nature.

Although Syeikh Muhammad Said Umar when interpreting the verses in *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* using the approach of *the salaf and khalaf scholars*, this study thinks that he is more inclined with the approach of salaf scholars *in interpreting the verses based on the number of interpretations made by him of which 18 verses represent 69.2% is the interpretation according to the approach of salaf scholars*, while eight verses represent 30.8% based on the approach of *Khalaf* scholars. For example, the author interprets part of the 22nd verse of surah al-Ra'd where he does not interpret the word "face of God" in the verse, namely; "and all those who are patient because they demand the reward for the face of their Lord is not because of the mercenaries of the world." This shows the tendency of Syeikh Muhammad

Said Umar to use the approach of salaf scholars when interpreting the verses in *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*.

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