**Interpretation of the Quran in Contemporary Indonesia: A Study on M. Quraish Shihab and His Work “Tafsir Al-Mishbâh”**

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<td><strong>Anahtar Kelimeler:</strong> Tefsir, M. Quraish Shihab, Biyografi, <em>Tafsir Al-Mishbâh</em>, Tefsir Metodu.</td>
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<td><strong>Article History</strong></td>
<td>This article discusses M. Quraish Shihab, a contemporary Indonesian commentator, his life, his writings and his greatest work, <em>Tafsir Al-Mishbâh</em>. M. Quraish Shihab is an academic who has held various important positions such as Chairman of the Central Indonesian Ulema Council, Rector of IAIN Jakarta, and Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. His work, <em>Tafsir Al-Mishbâh</em> is an Indonesian Quranic commentary that covers the entire 30 chapters of the Qur’an in 15 volumes in the order of the mushaf. This commentary is also one of the most popular works of interpretation in Indonesia which is widely used as a research and course material at various universities. <em>Tafsir Al-Mishbâh</em> tries to explain the Qur’an in an easy-to-understand language so that the Qur’an can live in society; because the primary purpose of the revelation of the Qur’an is to be a guide to humanity. With this work and numerous other works in the field of commentary, M. Quraish Shihab has been named the pioneer of modern Southeast Asian commentary, which interprets the Qur’an in light of contemporary realities and needs. This article explores numerous aspects, including M. Quraish Shihab’s biography, some of his famous works, the background writing of <em>Tafsir Al-Mishbâh</em>, the characteristics and references of the commentary, and the method of commentary. This article aims to acquaint readers with the background writing of <em>Tafsir Al-Mishbâh</em> and inform them about the development and character of modern commentary works in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia.</td>
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INTRODUCTION

M. Quraish Shihab is credited with developing the approach of contemporary interpretation\(^1\) in Indonesia as the first expert on Qur’an interpretation.\(^2\) Quraish Shihab’s dedication to the study of the Qur’an is demonstrated by the numerous works he has authored on the subject of Qur’anic commentary. Among his most significant and popular works are “Membumikan” Al-Qur’an (Earthing the Qur’an), Tafsir Al-Mishbah, Secercah Cahaya Ilahi (Divine Light), Wawasan Al-Qur’an (Insights of the Qur’an), Tafsir Al-Qur’an al-Karim, Mukjizat Al-Qur’an (Miracles of the Qur’an), and Menabur Pesan Ilahi (Sowing Divine Message). Among his greatest masterpieces is Tafsir Al-Mishbah, which includes a comprehensive interpretation of the Qur’an in 30 chapters, divided into 15 volumes, and was written using the tahliili methods.\(^3\)

Quraish Shihab’s religious views are often moderate, emphasizing the Qur’an’s interpretation in light of contemporary realities and needs.\(^4\) It is referred to the moderate scripturalism. A scholar depends on a basic religious text to resolve all life problems without discounting the possibility of alternative textual interpretations.\(^5\) Quraish’s religious ideas can be broadly defined as the moderate scripturalism, in which he emphasizes both the significance of adhering to the Qur’an and the importance of seeking alternative interpretations that are consistent with the solutions to current social problems. In contrast to fundamentalist Muslim groups’ strict adherence to the text’s tone, Quraish Shihab places a high value on the socio-cultural context of an ever-changing society.\(^6\) Shihab believes that the superiority of gender is a textual interpretation that deters the Qur’ans main message of promoting equality for all. It also requires the development of a more contextual interpretation that adheres to several principles, including the principle of human equality.\(^7\)

This article discusses Quraish Shihab and Tafsir Al-Mishbah, a work of interpretation that ranks among Indonesia’s contemporary commentaries. The work was chosen as research subject because it is widely regarded as Quraish Shihab’s most significant work in interpretation. Additionally, by studying this work, one can learn more about the development of interpretation in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia.

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\(^1\) Contemporary Tafsir means an interpretation written with a contemporary approach or written in contemporary times. The contemporary approaches to the analysis of the Qur’an are like synoptic and thematic exegesis. See Muhsin Demirci, Tefsir Usulü (Istanbul: İFAV Yayınları, 2019), 297; Hussein Abdul-Raof, Schools of Qur’anic Exegesis: Genesis and Development (New York, N.Y: Routledge, 233.


\(^4\) Abdullah Saeed (ed.), Approaches to the Qur’an in Contemporary Indonesia, 78.


\(^7\) Diah Ariani Arimbi, Reading Contemporary Indonesian Muslim Women Writers: Representation, Identity and Religion of Muslim Women in Indonesian Fiction (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 66.
1. M. Quraish Shihab Biography

M. Quraish Shihab was born on February 16, 1944, in Rappang, a small town in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. He grew up in a family of wealthy merchant-ulama in Makassar, Indonesia. His father, Abdurrahman Shihab (d. 1406/1986), was a professor of interpretation. Apart from being an entrepreneur, his father was also involved in numerous preaching and teaching activities, particularly in interpretation, from an early age. His mother, Asma, was a relative of Sultan Rappang. Abdurrahman Shihab was a well-respected cleric in Makassar and throughout South Sulawesi. In 1959-1965, he served as Rector of the Universitas Muslim Indonesia (UMI), and in 1972-1977, he served as Rector of IAIN (now UIN/ State Islamic University) Alauddin Makassar.

Quraish Shihab moved to Malang in 1956 to pursue his study at Darul Hadits al-Fiqhiyyah Islamic Boarding School. In 1958, he moved to Cairo, Egypt, and was accepted into Thanawiyah Al-Azhar in second grade. He received his Lc. (Undergraduate title) in 1967 from the Department of Tafsir and Hadith, Faculty of Islamic Theology, Al-Azhar University. Additionally, he pursued a master’s degree at the same college, Al-Azhar University, obtaining a master’s degree (MA) in 1969 for a specialization in the field of Qur’anic commentaries with a thesis titled “al-I’jāz al-Tashrī ‘iy li al-Qu’rān al-Karim” (The Qur’an’s Miracles from a Legal Perspective).

Quraish Shihab served as Vice-Rector for Academic and Student Affairs at IAIN Alauddin, Ujung Pandang, after returning from Egypt in 1973. He worked in this position until 1980. Additionally, he served as the Coordinator of Private Higher Education Region VII in Eastern Indonesia and as the Assistant Police Chief of Eastern Indonesia in mental development. Unsatisfied with his master’s degree, he returned to Al-Azhar University in 1980 to pursue his doctorate. He was awarded a Doctorate two years later with the title Summa Cum Laude or Mumtaz ma’a Martaban al-Sharaf al-Ólå (Award Level I). Quraish Shihab is the first doctor of Southeast Asia, acquiring this degree.

Quraish Shihab has held several significant and vital roles, including Chairman of the Indonesian Ulema Council (since 1984), member of Committee of Validation Qur’anis Mushaf for the Ministry of Religion (since 1989), and member of the National Education Advisory Board (1989). He is also involved in managing the Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals Association, the Association of Sharia Sciences, and the Consortium for Religious Sciences of the Ministry of National Education.

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8 Anwar et al., Cahaya, Cinta, Dan Canda, 3.
10 Abdullah Muaz et al., Khazanah Mufasir Nusantara, ed. Muhammad Khoirul Anwar (Jakarta: Program Studi Ilimu Al-Qur’an dan Tafsir, 2020), 162.
12 Abdullah Saeed (ed.), Approaches to the Qur’an in Contemporary Indonesia, 68.
13 Anwar et al., Cahaya, Cinta, Dan Canda, 13.
16 Anwar et al., Cahaya, Cinta, Dan Canda, 72.
17 Muhammad Iqbal - Amin Hussein Nasution, PEMIKIRAN POLITIK ISLAM: DARI MASA KLASIK HINGGA INDONESIA KONTEMPORER (Rawamangun, Jakarta: Kencana, 2010), 253; Anwar et al., Cahaya, Cinta, Dan Canda, 28.
Quraish Shihab was appointed Rector of IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah in Jakarta in 1992, following his appointment as Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs.20 Then, in 1998, President Soeharto appointed Quraish Shihab to the Seventh Development Cabinet (Kabinet Pembangunan VII) as Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia.21

However, this role lasted only two months due to significant resistance to Soeharto. Finally, in May 1998, a reform movement led by leaders such as Mohammad Amien Rais and students succeeded in overthrowing Suharto after 32 years in power. Soeharto’s fall also resulted in the collapse of the newly established cabinet, including Quraish Shihab’s role as Minister of Religion. Additionally, the termination of Quraish Shihab’s role was caused by accusations that he was a Shia follower.22

Not long after Soeharto’s fall, during the government of President B.J. Habibie, Quraish Shihab was appointed Indonesia’s Ambassador to Egypt, concurrently serving as the country’s ambassador to Djibouti and Somalia.23 Shihab wrote his masterpiece, Tafsir Al-Mishbah, in 14 volumes while working as an ambassador. After returning to Indonesia, Quraish Shihab completed the final volume, bringing the interpretation to a total of 15 volumes covering all 30 chapters of the Qur’an.24 Quraish Shihab established the Center for the Study of the Qur’an (Pusat Studi Al-Qur’an/PSQ) in Jakarta as an educational institution and center for Qur’anic study. Additionally, to publish his writings, he formed a publishing company Lentera Hatı (a name taken from one of his book titles).25

2. The Works of Quraish Shihab

Quraish Shihab is a scholar-thinker who is a prolific writer.26 Almost all of his works deal with the topics on Qur’an and its interpretation, and the majority of his works consistently receive a positive public response and become bestsellers. Among these works are the following:

2.1. Membumikan Al-Qur’an (Earthing the Qur’an)

“Membumikan” Al-Qur’an: Fungsi dan Peran Wahyu dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat (Earthing the Qur’an: The Function and Role of Revelation in People’s Lives) is the full title of the book. He started writing the book in 1975, and then this was first published in 1992.27 The motive for releasing the book is the request of a publisher named al-Mizan in Bandung, Indonesia, to publish numerous papers and written lectures by Quraish Shihab.28 This intention was realized with the publication of the book. The book contains almost sixty texts on two main topics: exegesis and the science of interpretation and

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21 Anwar et al., Cahaya, Cinta, Dan Canda, 132; Muaz et al., Khazanah Mufasir Nusantara, 162.
23 Anwar et al., Cahaya, Cinta, Dan Canda, 293.
24 Anwar et al., Cahaya, Cinta, Dan Canda, 282.
26 M. Sakti Garwan, Diskursus Studi Qur’an-Hadis Kontemporer (Jakarta: Guepedia Group, 2020), 55.
27 Anwar et al., Cahaya, Cinta, Dan Canda, 272.
28 Muaz et al., Khazanah Mufasir Nusantara, 174.
some major Qur’anic lessons.²⁹ It is one of Quraish Shihab’s most famous and popular works.³⁰

2.2. Lentera Hati (Heart Lantern)

This book is a brief, condensed, and concise composition incorporating numerous Islamic Wisdom. As the title implies, the book encourages readers to enlighten their souls to comprehend and apply the Qur’an’s principles. The book is a collection of previously published essays.³¹ The book appears to have inspired Quraish to name the publishing he started, the Lentera publisher, after it. Lentera Hati (Heart Lantern) is one of his most famous books, along with Membumikan al-Quran (Earthing the Qur’an), Wawasan al-Quran (Insights of the Qur’an), and Tafsir Al-Mishbāḥ.³²

2.3. Wawasan Al-Qur’an (Insights of the Qur’an)

Wawasan Al-Qur’an (Insights of the Qur’an) was first published in 1996,³³ and comprises 33 Qur’anic subjects on various social and ethical issues. The book began as a collection of Quraish essays he delivered for "Istiqal Study for Executives."³⁴ Quraish Shihab divided the topic into five themes: faith, mu’āmala issues, humans and society, features of human activity, and significant ummah issues.³⁵ As the title implies, the book analyzes significant Qur’anic themes through a thematic approach.³⁶ Quraish analyzed how the Qur’an talks about a variety of topics in the book, including destiny, death, the Last Day, justice, health, women, humanity, religion, art, politics, science and technology, ukhuwah, jihad, and deliberation.³⁷ As with the mawdū‘ī interpretation approach, Quraish Shihab collected verses relevant to the current issue, then arranged them chronologically and comprehended the munāsabah (connection) between each verse.³⁸

2.4. Mukjizat Al-Qur’an (Miracles of the Qur’an)

Mukjizat Al-Qur’an (Miracles of the Qur’an) was published a year after Wawasan Al-Qur’an. According to Quraish’s confession, the book came about as a result of numerous friends suggesting that he write a book about the Qur’an’s miracles that is easy to absorb.³⁹ Quraish Shihab attempts to illustrate the miraculous side of the Qur’an

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³⁰ M. Quraish Shihab, Lentera Al-Quran Kisah dan Hikmah Kehidupan (Bandung: Mizan, 2008), 5.
³¹ Anwar et al., Cahaya, Cinta, Dan Canda, 272.
³² Shihab, Lentera Al-Quran, 5.
³⁴ M. Quraish Shihab, Wawasan Al-Quran: Tafsir Mauḍū‘i Atas Pelbagai Persoalan Umat (Bandung: Mizan, 1996), xi; Anwar et al., Cahaya, Cinta, Dan Canda, 272.
³⁵ Shihab, Wawasan Al-Quran, 1–2; Sabine Schmidtke (ed.), The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology, 784.
³⁶ M. Quraish Shihab, Secercah cahaya Ilahi: hidup bersama Al-Qur’an, ed. Afif Muhammad (Bandung: Mizan, 2007), 16; Sabine Schmidtke (ed.), The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology, 784.
³⁷ Shihab, Wawasan Al-Quran, 1–2.
via the perspective of language, scientific proof, and the Qur’an’s supernatural message
in this work.40

2.5. Tafsir Al-Qur’an al-Karim

The book discusses the interpretation of the Qur’an on short chapters by the
temporal sequence of the chapters’ revelation or by the revelation’s chronology.41 The
author interprets 24 Makkah chapters revealed during the early years of Muhammad’s
prophetic period. According to the chapter, this discussion follows the taḥlīlī method42,
which is to interpret verse by verse. The book’s novelty is its interpretation of the
passage about the time of its revelation. When we read the book, the intricacies of
upholding monotheism, embodying social justice in its manifestations, and human
accountability in the hereafter are readily apparent in these early Makkah chapters. In
this work, Quraish continues to emphasize the Qur’an’s linguistic approach and
terminology when discussing its verses.43

2.6. Tafsir Al-Mishbah

Tafsir Al-Mishbah is Quraish Shihab’s greatest masterpiece. The book is composed
of 15 volumes that include a comprehensive explanation of 30 juz of verses and chapters
from the Qur’an. This commentary was written using the taḥlīlī method44, which entails
interpreting the Qur’an verse by verse according to the order in the musḥaf. According
to Quraish Shihab’s confession, he completed his commentary in four years, beginning
on Friday, Rabi-ul-awwal 4, 1420/June 18, 1999, in Egypt and completing on Friday,
September 5, 2003, in Jakarta.45 Quraish worked on it for an average of seven hours
every day.46

2.7. Logika Agama (Religious Logic)

Quraish conveys his concern over the rapid changes in this text, originally titled
“al-Khawātir”, which eventually leads to the belief that nothing remains unchanged but
the change itself. Some people exaggerate the importance of reason and perceive it as an
agreement. Finally, this perspective diminishes the importance of religion in life.47
According to Quraish Shihab, some aspects are changeable (mutaghayyirāt), and others
are immutable (thawābīt). Problems relating to social society, in general, can adapt to
the advancement of society. However, problems concerning faith and religious
foundations, as well as concerns regarding universal human dignity, should remain
unaltered.48

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40 Shihab, Mukjizat Al-Quran, 88.
41 Ahmad Bazith, Studi Metodologi Tafsir (West Sumatera: Insan Cendekia Mandiri, 2001), 43.
42 Abdullah Saeed (ed.), Approaches to the Qur’an in Contemporary Indonesia, 70.
43 M. Quraish Shihab, Tafsir Al-Quran al-Karim: Tafsir atas Surat-surat Pendek Berdasarkan Urutan
Turunnya Wahyu (Bandung: Pustaka Hidayah, 1997), vi.
44 Anwar et al., Cahaya, Cinta, Dan Canda, 283.
45 Anwar et al., Cahaya, Cinta, Dan Canda, 282; Garwan, Diskursus Studi Qur’an-Hadis Kontemporer, 56.
46 M. Quraish Shihab, Menabur Pesan Ilahi: Al-Qur’an Dan Dinamika Kehidupan Masyarakat (Ciputat,
Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2006), 310.
47 M. Quraish Shihab, Logika Agama: Kedudukan Wahyu & Batas-Batas Akal Dalam Islam (Ciputat, Jakarta:
Lentera Hati; Pusat Studi al-Quran, 2005), 11–13; Anwar et al., Cahaya, Cinta, Dan Canda, 268.
48 Shihab, Logika Agama, 12.
3. About Tafsir Al-Mishbāh

Tafsir Al-Mishbāh is a 15-volume compilation of commentary written in Indonesian by M. Quraish Shihab. The book contains an explanation of the complete Qur’an in 30 chapters, beginning with sūrat al-Fātiḥah and ending with sūrat an-Nās in the sequence of the manuscripts. The book was initially published in 2000 by Lentera Hati publishers in Jakarta and was reprinted in 2004.\(^\text{49}\)

Before interpreting the verses in each chapter, Quraish Shihab explains that acts as an introduction. The introduction discusses various aspects of the chapter to be interpreted, including the chapter’s name, the number of verses, the virtues of the chapter, the location of the chapter’s revelation, the chapter that preceded the chapter’s revelation, the chapter’s relationship with other chapters, and a comprehensive description of the chapter’s contents and asbāb al-nuzūl (occasions or circumstances of revelation).\(^\text{50}\)

When understanding the Qur’an, the verses are classified according to their content’s subject.\(^\text{51}\) The term that requires an explanation from a verse is Arabic and has an Indonesian transliteration. In presenting the Qur’an, the author attempts to present the topic of each chapter in terms of the chapter’s main theme.\(^\text{52}\) When the major themes of a chapter are recognized, the overall meaning of each chapter of the Qur’an becomes more understandable. The translation is written independently of the interpretation. The translation is in italics, while the commentary is in regular type.\(^\text{53}\)

Quraish Shihab never avoids discussing the concept of al-munāsabah in Tafsir Al-Mishbāh, which is reflected in six things: word for word harmony within a chapter; compatibility of the verse’s content with the verse’s closing (fawāṣil); compatibility of the verse with the following verse; compatibility of the initial description of one chapter with the closing; compatibility of the closing of the chapter with the initial description of the next chapter; and compatibility of the chapter’s theme with chapter’s name.\(^\text{54}\)

3.1. Commentaries’ Writing Background

There is one primary reason why Quraish Shihab chose the title al-Mishbāh for his commentary. In Arabic, the word “al-Mishbāh” means "light, lamp, or lantern". This demonstrates that the Qur’an’s light has illuminated the meaning of life and the numerous issues encountered by humanity. Quraish Shihab wishes for the Qur’an to be more grounded, to exist in society, and for its contents to be understandable to the readers.\(^\text{55}\)

There are several reasons for the creation of Tafsir Al-Mishbāh, including the following: First, it is anticipated that this interpretation will make it easier for Muslims to comprehend the contents of the verses of the Qur’an by elaborating in detail what

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\(^{49}\) Ishak, Islamic Rationalism, 107.

\(^{50}\) M. Quraish Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbāh: Pesan, Kesan, Dan Keserasian al-Qur’an (Ciputat, Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2005), 1/3-10, 14/3-4.

\(^{51}\) Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbāh, 5/5-17, 5/17-25.

\(^{52}\) Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbāh, 5/3.

\(^{53}\) Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbāh, 1/14, 1/27, 1/28.

\(^{54}\) Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbāh, 14, 651.

\(^{55}\) Mafi Amir, Literatur tafsir Indonesia (Ciputat: LP. UIN Jakarta, 2011), 251; Anwar et al., Cahaya, Cinta, Dan Canda, 283.
messages are explained by the Qur'an based on the purpose of the sura or its main theme. According to Quraish Shihab, while many individuals are interested in comprehending the Qur'an's messages, they face barriers related to time, knowledge, and references.⁵⁶

Second, many Muslims specialize in reading particular suras of the Qur'an, such as Surah Yasin, yet have difficulties comprehending its substance despite having mastered the translation. Quraish Shihab felt compelled to compose an interpretation of the surah of the Qur'an in order to provide readers with a proper comprehension of what they were reading.⁵⁷ The third is the error of scholars who do not comprehend scientific issues about the science of the Qur'an, which focuses on the harmony of the Qur'an writing. According to Quraish Shihab, many of them do not understand the systematics of drafting the Qur'an, which has a very emotional educational aspect. Last, there was encouragement from Indonesian Muslims, which affected Quraish Shihab and compelled him to write his commentary.⁵⁸

3.2. Characteristics of Interpretation

Each commentary book has distinctive characteristics that define the interpretation. The following are some features of *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*:

1. *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* provides a contextualized interpretation of the Qur'an for Indonesian contexts. The interpretation's explanation corresponds to many current events in the Indonesian Islamic world and even abroad. *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* is a modern-era interpretation with a strong emphasis on contemporary societal issues, including radicalism, religious tolerance, leadership, and gender equality.⁵⁹

2. The Qur'an's verses are interpreted by grouping them, with each group containing a variable number of verses. Several verses are grouped due to the common theme discussed in these verses.⁶⁰

3. When Quraish Shihab interpreted verses from the Qur'an, he added his comments on the lines of the verses being interpreted. Quraish Shihab used italics in translated sentences to distinguish between verse translations and comments.⁶¹

4. *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* was written in simple language and included a structured systematic interpretation, allowing it to be more easily understood by a broad audience.

5. *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* is replete with references to numerous sources relating to the Qur'an's explanation. Not only does this *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* quote from the prophet's hadith, his companions and mutaqaddimin scholars, and commentaries' scholars, but it also cites numerous pieces of information relevant to the verse's context, such as information about modern science.⁶²

6. Tafsir Al-Mishbah is extremely dense in promoting correspondence between chapters, between verses, and between the end of a verse and the beginning of a chapter.63

7. One of his interpretations differs significantly from those of the majority of commentators, for example, regarding the requirement of a Muslim woman to wear the hijab64, which qualifies Quraish Shihab as a liberal figure.65

3.3. Source of Interpretation

Quraish Shihab used a variety of commentaries as a reference or source of interpretation when composing the book of Tafsir Al-Mishbah. Generally, he mentioned the reference books in the "Foreword" and "Introduction" to the volume I on Tafsir al-Mishbah. Additionally, Quraish Shihab sometimes mentions the names of the scholars and books when citing the interpretations of these verses. These sources include Sahih al-Bukhari by Muhammad b. Isma'il al-Bukhari (d. 256/870)66; Sahih Muslim by Muslim b. al-Hajjaj (d. 261/875)67; Nazm al-durar by Ibrâhim b. 'Umar al-Biqâ'i (d. 885/1480)68; Fi zilâl al-Qur'an by Sayyid Qub (d. 1386/1966)69; Tafsir al-Mizân by Muhammad Husayn al-Tabâtabâ'î (d. 1981)70; Tafsir Asma'ul-Husnâ by al-Zaîjâj (d. 311/923)71; Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azîm by Ibn Kathir (d. 774/1373)72; Tafsir Jalâlayn by Jalâluddin al-Mahalli (d. 864/1459) and Jalâluddin al-Suyûtî (d. 911/1505)73; al-Tafsir al-kabîr by Fakhruddin al-Râzî (d. 606/1210)74; al-Kashshâf' by Zamakshari (d. 538/1144)75; al-Durr al-manâsîr by Suyûtî; at-Tahrîr wa't-tanwîr by Muhammad Tâhir b. 'Ashūr (d. 1393/1973)76; Ihyâ'u 'ulûmu'ddin and Jawâhir al-Qur'an by Abû Hâmid al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111)77; Bayânû i'jâz al-Qur'an by al-Khattâbî (d. 388/998); Mafâtih al-ghayb by Fakhruddin ar-Râzî78; al-

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63 Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbah, 2/284, 7/120, 7/140.
64 Regarding the hijab, Quraish Shihab clarified that women are not required to cover their hair and a part of their bodies. He stated in his commentary on Sûrat Nur verse 31: "Finally, we can argue that individuals who cover their entire bodies with the exception of their faces and (palms) of their hands carry out the sound of the verse's language, perhaps excessively. However, it would be unfair to assert that those who do not wear the veil or who expose part of their hands have obviously violated religious norms. Does the Quran not describe the boundaries of the genitalia? Even the academics had differing opinions when debating it." See Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbah, 9/333. The majority of scholars, including Aîshah (d. 58/678), Ibn Abbâs (d. 68/687), Said b. Jubair (d. 94/713), Ata (d. 114/732), and Qatâdah (d. 117/732), are of the opinion that the only visible parts of a woman's body in regards to hijab are the face and palms. See Ibn Jabr Mujahid, Tafsir Mujahid Ibn Jabr, critical ed. Muhammad Abdul-Salam (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr al-Hadisah, 1410/1989), 491; Muhammad bin Jarir Al-Tabari, Jami’al-Bayan fi Ta’wil Ayy al-Qur’an, 1420/2000, 19/157-157.
66 For examples, see Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbah, 3/17, 220, 223.
67 For examples, see Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbah, 3/22, 38, 7/106.
68 For examples, see Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbah, 1/43, 3/41, 71, 138, 150.
69 For examples, see Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbah, 3/21, 67, 166.
70 For examples, see Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbah, 68, 72, 75, 80, 95, 97, 98.
71 For examples, see Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbah, 3/204, 6/524, 7/79, 114.
72 For examples, see Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbah, 3/134, 2/314, 355, 464.
73 For examples, see Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbah, 6/33, 229, 7/520, 519.
74 For examples, see Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbah, 3/13, 218, 227, 245.
75 For examples, see Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbah, 6/39, 145, 364, 592.
76 For examples, see Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbah, 4/184, 189, 240, 267, 8/15, 37 47, 68, 84.
77 For examples, see Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbah, 3/92, 251.
78 For examples, see Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbah, 7/10, 25, 168, 198, 211, 286, 414, 476.
Interpretation of the Quran in Contemporary Indonesia: A Study on M. Quraish Shihab and His Work “Tafsir Al-Mishbāh”

Burhān by Zarkashi (d. 794/1392)⁹⁷; Asrārū tartibi’l-Qur‘ān and al-Iktān by as-Suyūṭī⁸⁰; Tafsir al-Manār by Muḥammad ‘Abduh (d. 1322/1905) and Muḥammad Rashid Ridā (d. 1354/1935).⁸¹

3.4. Interpretation Method

In Tafsir al-Mishbāh, Quraish Shihab employs the taḥlīlī method to explain Qur’anic verses.⁸² The taḥlīlī method is used to interpret the Qur’an by explaining each verse and each chapter in the order in which they appear in the muḥaʃaf. ⁸³ The author purposefully used this method to reveal all of the Qur’an’s contents in detail so that the guidance contained within can be explained and understood by the readers. Additionally, to facilitate comprehension of the Qur’an, Quraish Shihab emphasized the explanation of the main theme or purpose of the Qur’anic verses.⁸⁴

Regarding the elaboration technique in the Tafsir al-Mishbāh, Quraish Shihab began by writing down the chapter’s name, explaining the chapter’s names and the background of the chapter’s revelation finally, the chapter’s global or main theme. Additionally, the relationship between the chapter to be examined and the chapter previously reviewed is described, as well as the chapter’s history and the number of verses in the chapter.

The discussion moved on to a study of numerous verses combined into groups based on a common theme or was still part of the same discussion. The verse under discussion is written in Arabic with italic style. The asbāb al-nuẓūl of a verse, the meaning of the words, and the overall meaning of the verse were all reviewed. Typically, the words are written in Arabic, but the pronunciation (transliteration) and meaning are in Indonesian.

The following section will detail the method of interpretation used in Tafsir Al-Mishbāh to provide a more comprehensive view of the interpretation.

3.4.1. Interpretation of the Qur’an using the Qur’an

The most effective method of correctly understanding the Qur’an is to interpret it using the Qur’an.⁸⁵ Quraish Shihab recognized the necessity of understanding the verses of the Qur’an through the lens of the Qur’an and, therefore, frequently found answers for the Qur’an by the use of other verses in his interpretation. Quraish Shihab occasionally uses Qur’anic literature to clarify generic terminology or phrases to obtain more specific information. Among these is the term مالك يوم القيامة “Owner of the Day of Judgment”.⁸⁶

According to Quraish Shihab, the term translates as ”King" and "Owner." Shihab quotes Qur'an sūrat Āl ‘Imrān 3/26 to elucidate the term, Say: “O Allah, Lord of all

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⁹⁷ For examples, see Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbāh, 7/326, 11/73.
⁹⁸ For examples, see Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbāh, 3/7, 8, 16, 21, 68.
⁹⁹ For examples, see Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbāh, 2/187, 4/245, 15/430.
⁸² Andrew Rippin - J. A. Mojaddedi (eds.), The Wiley Blackwell Companion to the Qur’an, 480; Riddell, Malay Court Religion, Culture and Language, 4; Anwar et al., Cahaya, Cinta, Dan Canda, 245.
⁸⁴ Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbāh, 1/vii.
⁸⁶ al-Fāṭiḥa 1/4.
authorities! You give authority to whoever You please and remove it from who You please. You honor whoever You please and disgrace who You please. All good is in Your Hands. Surely You ‘alone’ are Most Capable of everything.” Thus, the term King refers to Allah as the All-Powerful King. The term “Owner” refers to Allah as the Owner, who has the authority to grant the power to anyone he pleases and take it away from whomever he pleases. Through this verse of Ali ‘Imran, Quraish Shihab wants to emphasize that Allah is the Absolute King and has the will for everything He has.

Additionally, Quraish Shihab used verses from the Qur’an to clarify the various interpretations of a verse’s words. For instance, consider sustenance. For a while, the word had the connotation of giving; subsequently, it developed into meanings such as food, rain, and salary. It does not end there; sustenance can also refer to prophethood. As the Prophet Shu‘ab stated, “O my people! Consider if I stand on a clear proof from my Lord and He has blessed me with a good provision (i.e., prophethood) from Him (should I reject His commandments?).” (Sūrat Hūd 11/88).

Shihab also employs the process of Qur’anic interpretation to explain the meaning of a phrase. For instance, the term اللّه, which means thousand, does not have to be understood as a number between 999 and 1001, but the word thousand indicates a great deal, just as Allah’s word does: “Each one of them wishes to live a thousand years” that is living in a very long time. As can be seen from the explanation above, Shihab put a great emphasis on the process of understanding the Qur’an with the Qur’an.

3.4.2. Interpretation with Hadith

The other method, which is also critical for understanding the Qur’an, is to interpret it using hadith information. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is a prophet who came to humanity to bring and teach the Qur’an. As a result, no one knows more about the Qur’an’s contents than the Prophet Muhammad himself, even the Prophet’s personality or character was seen in the Qur’an. Quraish Shihab also laid great emphasis on hadith information as a way to explain the Qur’an. The history of the hadith is frequently referenced from hadith books without elaborating on its quality, although it occasionally includes the narrators.

Shihab employs hadith to explain the possible meaning of a verse in Tafsir Al-Mishbahā. The hadith does not directly explain a text but rather promotes other

88 Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbahā, 1/43.
89 Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbahā, 1/545.
90 al-Baqara 2/96.
91 Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbahā, 15/427.
92 The following is another example of understanding the Qur’an with the Qur’an: Other verses, such as Sūrat al-Mā’īda 5/90 and Sūrat al-An’ām 6/145, explain Sūrat al-Mā’īda 5/3, which discusses haram foods. The verses of Sūrat al-‘A‘fāf 7/26 and Sūrat al-Ahzāb 33/59 clarify Sūrat al-Nahl 16/81, which discusses clothes. The verse Sūrat al-Mā’īda 5/3, which discusses the permissibility of marrying persons of the Qur’an, is cancelled by the verse Sūrat al-Baqara 2/221. Sūrat al-Nahl 16/81, which describes the prophets’ testimony in the Hereafter, is expanded upon in Sūrat al-Zumar 39/69. See Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbahā, 3/20, 3/30, 7/311, 313.
94 Muḥammad Ḥusayn adh-Dhahābī, al-Tafsīr wa l-mufassirīn (Cairo: Maktabat Waḥba, 2000), 1/42.
interpretations. For instance, in verse, “The Path of those You have blessed—not those You are displeased with, or those who are astray.”

According to Shihab, this verse uses the words "You (Allah)" about bestowing blessings but does not use the term "Allah" about furious things. This is because bestowing favors is a good act, and hence it is natural to place one’s trust in Allah. In general, wrath might be considered negative, as it is not based on Allah. Then Shihab supplied a hadith that clarifies the order to avoid wrath or anger, namely the hadith about the Prophet’s will to one of his companions “Do not be furious” (Narrated by Bukhārī through Abu Hurayrah).

Along with elucidating the content of a verse, Shihab employed hadith to clarify technical aspects of the Qur’an. For instance, the Prophet Muhammad advised responding to the query at the end of sūrat al-Tin with the following acknowledgment: “Yes, O Allah (You are the Wise, Most Just), and I am one among those who bear witness to that” (Narrated by Abu Dawud and at-Tirmidhi through Abu Hurayrah).

3.4.3. Interpretation using Statements from Ṣaḥāba and Tābi‘īn

It is critical to use information or statements from Ṣaḥāba (Prophet’s companions) and Tābi‘īn (The Followers of Ṣaḥāba) in interpreting. This is because the companions observed the revelation and were close with the prophet and so had a better understanding of the verse’s meaning and context. The Tābi‘īn are those who socialize and study with the Companions to get a lot of knowledge from the interpretations of the Qur’an verses by the Companions.

Quraish Shihab also mentions the Companions and Tābi‘īn at many points in Tafsir Al-Mishbāh, for example, while discussing the term al-ʿĀdiyat, which translates as a camel. The camel in issue is said to be the one that transports pilgrims from ʿArafah to Muzdalifah. This opinion is based on a story given to Ibn ʿAbbās (d. 68/687-88), which describes ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661)’s opinion. Regarding Tābi‘īn’s speech, it is evident from Shihab’s definition of “lawwāmah”. Shihab defined “lawwāmah” as someone who expresses regret and criticism when making a mistake. Shihab cited Hasan al-Basri (d. 110/728)’s explanation for this word: “You will not find it in the believer—for the sake of Allah—unless by condemning him and constantly asking: What do I want from what I say? What do I mean by my food? What do I mean when I speak about my heart’s whisper? While the defiant passes without ever self-criticism or regret.”

96 al-Fātiha 1/7.
98 Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbāh, 15/388. For more examples, see the explanation of verse Sūrat al-Falaq 113/1-5 and Sūrat al-Nasr 110/1-3. See Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbāh, 15/586, 15/633.
99 Zarkashi, al-Burhān, 2/176.
101 Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbāh, 15/463.
102 Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbāh, 14/624. For more examples, see the interpretation of the word “ummi” in Sūrat al-Baqara 2/78, interpretation of term “mīkālī” in Sūrat al-Baqara 2/98, interpretation of term
3.4.4. Language Aspects in Interpretation

Quraish Shihab put a great value on the Qur’ān’s linguistic aspect, as this is critical for a proper understanding of the Qur’ān. Semantics, or the meaning of words in the Qur’ān, is included in this. Most of a word’s meaning can be described without citing the source. For instance, Shihab said that the word سبیح is a command form derived from the word سباحا, which is derived from the word سباه, which means to keep away. For example, a person who swims is described because they are moving away from his original position while he swims. In a religious context, “tasbih” is “keeping God away from all defects, disrepute, and even from all attributes of perfection that the mind can imagine.”

In terms of a word’s meaning, Shihab also provides extensive illustrations of the several different meanings contained within the word. For instance, when Shihab described the meaning of the word أیات, he stated that the singular form is أیة. The Qur’ān used this term in a variety of contexts, including signs, miracles, the Qur’ān itself, teachings, and natural events. The Qur’ān is a verse because it is proof of Allah’s truth. Natural events are likewise verses since their unusual and astonishing existence, harmony, and functioning system are signs and evidence of God Almighty.

Linguistics, such as nāh and شارف, were also a focus of Shihab’s interpretation. For instance, the word سفرت was explained about the origin and the inclusion of the letter س meaning “will”. Occasionally, information on the number of words or terms in the Koran is included. For example, the word orphan appears in the Qur’ān 8 times in the single form, 14 times in the plural, and twice in the muthānā form.

3.4.5. The Use of Asbāb al-nuzūl

Asbāb al-nuzūl is critical in determining the correct interpretation of the Qur’ān. According to Quraish Shihab, the correct interpretation of the Qur’ān is dependent upon the understanding of the history of the Qur’ān’s verses. This historical knowledge is derived from historical sources of the Qur’ān’s revelation, which are compiled in a genre known as asbāb al-nuzūl. Quraish Shihab stated that it is more vital to discuss asbāb al-nuzūl than to focus on a comprehensive thematic approach.


103 Ibn Asad al-Maḥāsībī, Fahmūl-Qur’ān wa ma’ānīh, 248.
104 Sabine Schmidtke (ed.), The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology, 784.
105 al-ʿĀlî 87/1.
106 Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbāh, 15/195.
107 Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbāh, 15/289.
108 Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbāh, 15/286.
110 Ibn Asad al-Maḥāsībī, Fahmūl-Qur’ān wa ma’ānīh, 248, 326; Demirci, Tefsir Usulū, 229, 230, 266.
112 Thematic interpretation is an explanation of the Koran by collecting and explaining the Qur’an based on certain themes. See Muhammad Ghazālī, A Thematic Commentary on the Qur’an, trans. A. A. Shamis (Herndon, Va: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2000), xi; Demirci, Tefsir Usulū, 297.
Although Quraish Shihab employs thematic methods in his commentary works, such as Wawasan al-Quran, he emphasizes the importance of asbāb al-nuzūl studies and incorporates semantic studies. Moreover, Quraish Shihab confirmed that ascertaining asbāb al-nuzūl, or the time of the verse’s revelation, must be based on historical material derived from reputable sources. The reasoning is irrelevant in this circumstance except to examine the data and information. Ignoring strong evidence or authentic narrations in favor of weak narrations is not the proper way to judge history, even if logical arguments support them.

In general, Tafsir Al-Mishbāh offers information regarding asbāb al-nuzūl or the context of the verse’s revelation, if any. The asbāb al-nuzūl stated are sometimes specific enough to spark disagreement over the most likely explanation based on the available evidence. For instance, there is a belief that the verse in sūrat al-Ḍuḥā was revealed because the polytheists said that Allah had abandoned the Prophet Muhammad because the Qur’an had been cut off and had not been revealed for a long period. Quraish Shihab also cited Muhammad Abduh’s view that the verse was revealed because the Prophet missed revelation so much that it caused him to worry and fear.

3.4.6. Munāsabah of Verses and Chapters

Munāsabah refers to the process of establishing linkages between verses and chapters in the Qur’an to discover relationships of significance between one verse or chapter and others. Munāsabah’s understanding of Quranic interpretation is critical to obtain the correct interpretation. Quraish Shihab emphasizes studying munāsabah verses and chapters when it comes to Qur’anic interpretation. According to him, studying the Qur’an without regard for the munāsabah aspect will result in inadequate knowledge and may even result in a false understanding. Shihab continuously explains the munāsabah between chapters and verses in Tafsir Al-Mishbāh to demonstrate the Qur’anic verses’ coherence. If there are conflicting views on the munāsabah of a verse or chapter, Shihab will clarify them.

For example, the use of munāsabah in Tafsir Al-Mishbāh in the interpretation of sūrat al-Māidah verse 6 discusses purity (taḥārah). Shihab cited numerous scholars, including Bīqā’ī (d. 885/1480) and Sha’rāwī (d. 1419/1998), about the relationship between this verse and the following verses. According to Bīqā’ī, the preceding verse clarified the command to fulfill the contract and God’s concern for humanity by providing food and sexual needs. Thus, in verse 6, people are also given how the vow to

113 Sabine Schmidtke (ed.), The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology, 784.
114 Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbāh, 1/vi.
115 Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbāh, 15/545, 15/573-574.
119 Shihab, Wawasan Al-Quran, 346.
worship God is fulfilled. In contrast to this interpretation, Sha'rawî stated that the preceding verse clarified that food and marriage are gifts from Allah intended to help humanity learn about and meet Allah. Thus, in verse 6, Allah guides how to prepare to meet and know Allah while maintaining the sanctity of the soul, body, place, and time.121

3.4.7. Interpretation Using Ijtihad

Quraish Shihab is fully aware of the mind for a reason in the advancement of human civilization.122 The existence of this mind also distinguishes people as God’s creatures.123 The mind is also critical in comprehending religious materials to arrive at an accurate interpretation.124 Even from the beginning, the first chapter of the Qur’an that was revealed, sūrat al-Qalam, has blended Allah’s efforts with guidance, reason with heart, thought with remembrance, and faith with knowledge.125

_Tafsîr Al-Mishbâh_ makes it very obvious that Shihab employed rationality to justify or interpret what he believed to be acceptable. For instance, consider the term _al-ghâîṭ_126, which refers to a location to defecate. Linguistically, the term can refer to a high, a safe, or a low location. Regarding these varied terms, Shihab likes the meaning of al-ghâîṭ to be a low place, as a high place is typically easily perceived as a flag. Shihab further stated that historically, low places were preferred for defecating to avoid attracting attention.127

3.4.8. Interpretation with Modern Science

_Tafsîr Al-Mishbâh_ gives numerous interpretations using modern scientific instruments, particularly for verses that refer to natural science. For instance, while elucidating the verse, _Have We not formed the earth into a pendulum and the mountains into pegs?_128, Quraish Shihab explained that mountains originate from a dense layer of the earth’s crust that can generate enough pressure to balance the earth. Mountains will reinforce the earth’s moist layers, just as pegs do for a tent.129

The following verse also clarifies what sleep is, stating that it is a term _siyâṭa_ that translates as to “break”. According to contemporary knowledge, sleep is defined as the stoppage or lowering the human brain’s neuronal activity. That is why, while sleeping, both energy and body heat is decreased. At bedtime, the body feels peaceful and relaxed.

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121 Shihab, _Tafsîr Al-Mishbâh_, 3/34. For additional examples, see an explanation of the relationship between verse 218 of Sûrat al-Baqara and the previous verses that discuss those who believe, migrate, and strive in Allah’s way, an explanation of the relationship between verse 220 and verse 219 of Sûrat al-Baqara that discuss the property of orphans, and an explanation of the relationship between verse 236 of Sûrat al-Baqara and the previous verses that discuss divorce.

122 Shihab, _Wawasan Al-Quran_, 7.


125 Shihab, _Wawasan Al-Quran_, 7.

126 al-Nisâ’ 4/43.


128 al-Ḥadîd 6-7.

like muscles, nerves, or both are exhausted from their labor. All bodily functions cease during sleep, except metabolic processes such as urine flow from the kidneys and sweating. If these processes are stopped, they will cause harm to humans. While breathing intensity is reduced slightly, it is longer and more out of the chest than from the stomach.\textsuperscript{130} In several other verses, Shihab explains the verse using modern science\textsuperscript{131} by quoting experts, including an Egyptian geologist named Zaghul al-Najjar.\textsuperscript{132}

3.4.9. The Study of Fiqh in Commentary

Tafsir Al-Mishbah discusses fiqh issues in general, yet there are disagreements among scholars on certain fiqh subjects. Consider the verse that describes wudu (ablution). The section about wiping the head’s hair explains some scholars’ viewpoints from The Four Madhhab. Shihab did not choose or judge these scholars’ opinions.\textsuperscript{133} Avoiding lengthy disputes on the study of fiqh in Tafsir Al-Mishbah may be intended to simplify the interpretation for readers, as this is consistent with the interpretation’s stated objective of making it accessible to the broader community.

In addition to this study of fiqh, Quraish Shihab appears to provide additional insight into fiqh itself. For instance, in the chapter on fasting, it is explained that numerous people from ancient times to the present day, including the ancient Egyptians, practiced fasting.\textsuperscript{134} Additionally, numerous religious believers such as Astrotheology, Romans, Buddhists, and Christians also practice fasting.\textsuperscript{135}

In terms of fiqh in the Qur’an, Quraish Shihab’s efforts to interpret the Qur’an’s verses are more relevant to the present situation. As with the punishment of cutting off both hands in the verse فَإذَا أَذَاعُوا أَنْبِيَّاهُمْ ١٣٥ the verse could signify majazi, which means to paralyze the thief through imprisonment. This is because the word cut might very quickly imply majazi, as in the term إِفْطَعَوْا لِسَانِهِ which means to warn him to keep quiet and refrain from cutting his tongue. However, Shihab recognizes that the literal interpretation of majazi is incorrect, as practice at the time of the Prophet was not that way (not using the meaning of majazi).\textsuperscript{137} Additionally, Shihab provided another interpretation of the law of cutting off hands, stating that the severest punishment for thieves is to have their hands cut off. This indicates that a court may impose a lesser sentence than hand amputation if evidence shows that the law should be loosened.\textsuperscript{138} According to this assessment, Quraish Shihab seeks to resolve the modern dilemma of

\textsuperscript{130} Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbah, 15/9.
\textsuperscript{131} Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbah, 15/91, 15/104, 15/108.
\textsuperscript{133} Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbah, 3/36.
\textsuperscript{134} Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbah, 1, 401.
\textsuperscript{135} Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbah, 1/401-402.
\textsuperscript{136} al-Mā‘ida 5/38.
\textsuperscript{137} Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbah, 3/94-95.
\textsuperscript{138} Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbah, 3/95.
Islamic law through a state law that appears distinct it turns out that the state law of imprisoning thieves is still valid and in conformity with the Qur'an's commandments.

3.4.10. Sufism Approach in Commentaries

It may be said that Quraish Shihab devoted considerable attention to the study of Sufism to comprehend the Qur'an's verses. In numerous of his works, for example, Wawasan al-Quran, Shihab quoted Sufism specialists such as al-Qushayri (d. 465/1072) to comprehend the Qur'an's verses. For example, he also used the exact figure in Tafsir Al-Mishbāh while elucidating the term "al-shiddiqūn" in sūrat al-Ḥadid verse 19, Shihab cited al-Qushayri, who knows that "shiddiq" refers to someone who is both intellectually and physically equal.

Furthermore, Shihab applies the ishārī interpretation to other verses, not about Sufism. For instance, in the verse "أَإِلَىٰ مَنْ مَكَّنَ مِنْ آلِ خَالِدٍ" or one of you comes from the bathroom, the primary idea of the verse is purity. However, Shihab provided an intriguing explanation for why the verse is mentioned with the phrase "one of you" rather than the word "you" directly. It is a means to employ polite language when expressing something that should be kept private. The verse above does not explicitly state "or you return", but the editorial writes, "one of you returns." This ensures that no dialogue partners do anything that the public should be aware of or ashamed to mention.

Additionally, in sūrat al-Ḥadid verse 20, Shihab quotes ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib's words with a Sufi tone are as follows:

"Do not be sad that you have missed the delights of this world, for there are only six types of pleasures: food, drink, clothes, smells, vehicles, and sex. The best food is honey, insect saliva (bees), and the finest drink is water, which all creatures consume. The best clothes are silk, which caterpillars sew, and the most comforting aroma is perfume made of mouse blood. The favorite mode of transport was a horse, where many characters were slain, while sex was the meeting of the urinals."

From the description above, it is clear that Shihab emphasized the Sufi and Sufism themes in Tafsir Al-Mishbāh.

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140 Shihab, Wawasan Al-Quran, 284.
141 Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbāh, 14/34.
142 al-Nisā’ 4/43.
143 Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbāh, 2/453.
144 Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbāh, 14/39.
145 For more examples, see the interpretation of the term "qibla" in Sūrat al-Baqara 2/144, the word "mahabba" in Surat Āl-ʿImrān 3/31, the word "nūr" in Sūrat al-Mā‘īda 5/16, and the word "ṣhīfā" in Sūrat al-Isrā’ 17/82. See Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbāh, 1/350, 2/71, 3/54, 7/532.
CONCLUSION

Quraish Shihab is a contemporary Indonesian commentator who has long been active in Qur’anic interpretation and knowledge. Apart from his academic accomplishments, his skill in interpretation is demonstrated via the numerous works he has published. To make the Qur’an accessible to a broader audience, Quraish Shihab believed it was vital to write books or perform commentary studies in plain language. Quraish Shihab recognizes the value of the mawdū’ī or thematic interpretation method and hence employs it in his numerous writings to understand the Qur’an. He also highlighted frequently in his interpretation the importance of contextualizing divine revelation so that the truths contained within can be applied in real life.

Quraish Shihab’s work Tafsir Al-Mishbāh exemplifies the nature of modern commentary works emerging in the Southeast Asian region. Quraish Shihab began studying the Qur’an at a young age and continued to study the science of the Qur’an and its interpretation throughout his life, to the extent where Tafsir Al-Mishbāh is considered a masterpiece, occupying a prominent position among contemporary interpretations.

Tafsir Al-Mishbāh, as a contemporary interpretation, is written in Indonesian using basic and straightforward language and aims to address a variety of contemporary issues. This interpretation tries to simplify the Qur’an for it to be understood and embraced by a broader audience, allowing the Qur’an to coexist with civilization. Tafsir Al-Mishbāh employs several commentator approaches, including the interpretation of the Qur’an using the Qur’an, the interpretation using hadith materials, the statements of scholars, the use of asbāb al-nuzūl, munāsabah, rationality, and the Sufi approach. Additionally, this commentary is present by explaining the Qur’an through the use of modern scientific techniques to highlight the Qur’an’s miracles.

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