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HAMKA's Discourse on Sufism in the "Verse of Light"

Abdul Salam Muhamad Shukri*

Abstract

This article aims at highlighting HAMKA's discourse on Sufism in the 'Verse of Light' of Surah of al-Nūr in his Tafsir al-Azhar, the first complete Malay commentary of the Qur'an written around 1958-1966. It is well-known that HAMKA had written several earlier works on Sufism including *Tasauf Modernen* (1939) and *Perkembangan Tasauf dari Abad ke Abad* (1952). The later was republished in 1978 under *Tasauf: Perkembangan dan Pemurniannya* combining with his university lecture "*Mengembalikan Tasauf ke Pangkalnya*" conducted in 1958. Comparing to these works, his Tafsir is more vibrant since the subject is under the realm of the Qur'anic discourse. As such HAMKA has pointed out the position of *taṣawwuf* in his *Tafsīr*, namely in Surah al-Baqarah (*Juz' 3*), Surah Āli- 'Imrān, Surah al-A'raf, Surah Yūsuf, Surah al-Mu'minūn, and Surah al-Nūr, thus can be a source in understanding HAMKA's discourse on Sufism in the Qur'an. He had highlighted Sufism in the introduction to Part (*juz'*) 18, the earlier part that he had chosen to write his tafsir beginning from 1958. This research employs the qualitative methodology in which materials are from the Qur'an, books and journal articles. Findings reveal that the "Verse of Light" highlights some aspects of Sufism in which God, prophet, religion as well as human response to it in term of knowledge and practice. It is a discourse in Islamic spirituality. As far as HAMKA is concerned, God is the source of the Divine light which reached to the Prophet as a revelation as well as religion in order to benefit humanity, figuratively employed as the "light" (*nūr*) to the Heavens and earth. Moreover, the Qur'an uses an analogy to present this Sufi discourse in theory and practice. For HAMKA Sufism is an authentic philosophy of Islam (*kefalsafahan Islam*) as well as a "science" or "knowledge" (*'ilm*) in Islam.

Keywords: HAMKA, Sufism, Al-Qur'an, Tafsir al-Azhar, the Verse of Light

Introduction

Prof. Dr. Haji AbdulMalik AbdulKarim Amrullah (HAMKA) (1908-1981), also known as "*Buya Hamka*" is a well-known Malay Indonesian scholar. Throughout his life and scholarship he owns many titles such as in Malay "*tokoh ilmuwan*" (intellectual figure)," "a Malay scholar and

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reformist” as well as a “*da‘ī*” (preacher), “a public intellectual scholar,”¹ “Muslim Malay thinker,”² “Islamic theologian”, and a “true Ṣufī.”³

He is also known as an “Indonesian *‘ālim*, philosopher, writer, lecturer, politician, and journalist.”⁴ HAMKA is included among Islamic thinkers in the research project so called “*Tokoh Pemikir Alam Melayu*” (Islamic Thinkers in the Malay World) under Institut Alam dan Tamadun Melayu (ATMA), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM).⁵ In accord to HAMKA’s contributions, Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has honoured those had contributed to the country with a title of “*Pahlawan Nasional Indonesia*” including Syafruddin Prawiranegara, Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah atau Buya Hamka dan Sri Susuhunan Pakubuwono X on 8th November 2011.⁶

In addition, research on HAMKA are widely conducted in several academic institutions such as in Malaysia, Indonesia, Egypt and America as well from early 1990 until now.⁷ Furthermore, reflecting his

¹ James R. Rush, *Hamka’s Great Story: A Master Writer’s Vision of Islam for Modern Indonesia* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016)

² Khairuddin AlJunied, *Hamka and Islam: Cosmopolitan Reform in the Malay World* (Singapore: Cornell Southeast Asia Program/ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute Publishing, 2018)

³ M. Yunan Yusuf, *Corak Pemikiran Kalam Tafsir Al-Azhar* (Jakarta: Panjimas, 1990); Nur Hadi Ihsan, “Hamka (1908-1981): A Study of Some Aspects of His Sufi Thought,” Master of IRKH, Kuala Lumpur: IIUM, 1997; Khairuddin AlJunied, “In Defense of Guided Reason: Hamka and the Reconstruction of Southeast Asian Islam,” *History of Religion* 57: 2 (2017), 107-28; Haslina Ibrahim, “Hamka’s Da‘wah Reform: Islamisation of Self, Education and Institution,” *Al-Itqan* 6: 4 (2022), 24-46

⁴ “Hamka,” <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamka> (accessed 22 October 2023)

⁵ Zawayah Baba & Zuraidah Hassan, “Analisis Bibliografi Karya HAMKA dalam Koleksi Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia,” *International Journal of the Malay World and Civilisation (Iman)* 2 (1), (2014), 93-101 (https://www.ukm.my/jatma/wp-content/uploads/makalah/IMAN_2%281%29-%5B10%5D.pdf) (accessed 22 June 2023)

⁶ Tempo Interaktif, “Syafruddin dan Buya Hamka Pahlawan Nasional,” Tuesday, 8 November 2011, <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/365516/syafruddin-dan-buya-hamka-pahlawan-nasional> (accessed on 22 October 2023)

⁷ Among academic studies on HAMKA include M. Yunan Yusuf, “Corak Pemikiran Kalam Tafsir al-Azhar (Patterns of Theological Thought in Tafsir al-Azhar),” PhD Jakarta, 1990; Wan Sabri Wan Yusof, “Hamka’s Tafsir al-Azhar: Quranic Exegesis as a Mirror of Social Change,” PhD Temple University, 1997; Mashitah Ibrahim, “Manhaj al-Haj Abd al-Malik ‘Abd al-Karim Amr Allah fi kitabi Tafsir al-Azhar (Hamka’s Methodology in His Work, Tafsir al-Azhar),” PhD Department of Islamic Shariah of Kulliyah Dar al-‘Ulum, Cairo University, 1997; Nur Hadi Ihsan, “Hamka (1908-1981): A Study of Some Aspects of His Sufi Thought,” Master of IRKH, IIUM,

contribution and relevancy of HAMKA, IIUM has established his own research centre for HAMKA studies with the setting up of HAMKA Centre recently as well as in Indonesia with the formation of Hamka Center: Laboratorium Sosial dan Pemikiran Islam.¹ Recently, there is a Indonesian biopic produced on HAMKA's life in two volumes, entitled "Buya Hamka" in 2023.² Volume 1 of the film had a shown time of 106 minutes. While waiting for the second volume, the followings are HAMKA timeline, putting together his scholarly life and contributions to help reader to understand him more.

HAMKA Timeline: Life and Contributions

1908 Born 17 Feb 1908/13 Muharram 1326 in Tanah Sirah, Sungai Batang, Tasik Maninjau, Sumatera Barat, Indonesia.

Family background: His father is Haji Rasul or Abdul Karim Amrullah (1879-1945), his grandfather, Haji Amrullah and his great grandfather, Shaykh Muhammad Amrullah. HAMKA means "Haji AbdulMalik Karim Amrullah."

1916 Attended primary school at Sekolah Dasar until Standard Two.

1997; Fadzillah Din, "The Contribution of Tafsir al-Manar dan Tafsir al-Azhar toward Understanding the Concept of *ta'ah* and its Observance: A Theological Inquiry," PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2001; Nurbani Ismail, "Manhaj dirasat qadaya al-mar'ah bayna tafsir al-Sha'rawi wa tafsir al-Azhar: dirasah muqaranah," PhD Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage (al-Qur'an and Sunnah), Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005; Abdul Rouf, "Dimensi Tasawuf Karya Hamka: Analisis terhadap Tafsir Al-Azhar," PhD thesis, Jabatan al-Quran dan al-Hadith, Akademi Pengajian Islam, Universiti Malaya, 2012, (<http://ir.upm.edu.my/find/Search/Results?lookfor=Tafsir+al-Azhar&type=AllFields&limit=20>); Muhammad Zen Mansur, "Dimensi Tasawuf dalam Tafsir Al-Azhar (Analisis Terhadap Pemikiran dan Corak Tasawuf HAMKA dalam Tafsir Al-Azhar)," UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, Kota Palembang, Sumatera Selatan, 2013; Imran Ab Rahim, "Takhrij Hadith dalam Tafsir Al-Azhar Karangan Hamka," PhD thesis, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 2020 (<http://eprints.usm.my/52084/>); Azizah Rahmad, "An Annotated Translation of Hamka's Tasawuf Moderen," PhD thesis ISTAC, IIUM, 2020.

¹ HAMKA Centre, Department of Usul al-Din and Comparative Religion, AHAS KIRKHS, IIUM established in 2022, see *International Conference on the Contributions of Hamka on Islam and Humanity (ICCHIH) 2023: HAMKA on Islam and Humanity*, 24th October 2023 IIUM Gombak Campus, <https://conference.iium.edu.my/hamkacentre/>; Hamka Center: Laboratorium Sosial dan Pemikiran Islam, <https://www.instagram.com/hamkacenter/> (accessed 22 October 2023)

² Biopic on "Buya Hamka Vol. 1," <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt10656212/>; "Buya Hamka Vol. 2," <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt27246087/> (accessed on 22 October 2023)

- 1918 At the age of ten continued his education at his father new established religious school, Sumatera Thawalib in Padang Panjang.
- 1920 Disturbed by the divorce of his parent.
- 1923 Travelled all over Minangkabau as a teenager, gaining the nickname “Si-Bujang Jauh,” (the Boy from Afar) from his father.
- 1924 Departed to Java and met with political movement figures including Haji Oemar Said (H.O.S.) Tjokroaminoto (1882-1934), Ki Bagoes Hadikoesoemo (1890-1954), R. M. Soerjopranoto (1871-1959) dan KH. Fakhruddin (1890-1929) from “Syarikat Islam Hindia Timur” dan “Muhammadiyah.”
- 1925 Followed Muhammadiyah stand on khurafat, bidah, tarekat, kebatinan di Padang Panjang. Involved in politics by joining Sarekat Islam. His speeches were published in the magazine, *Khatibul Ummah*, which started with a circulation of 500 copies.
- 1927 Became religious teacher at Perkebunan Tebing Tinggi, Medan. In February 1927, he made the decision to go to Mecca. While in Mecca, he became correspondent for the daily "Andalas Light" (*Pelita Andalus*) and, also worked at a printing company owned by Mr. Hamid, son of Majid Kurdish father-in-law of Shaykh Ahmad al-Khatib al-Minangkabawi (1860-1916). His nickname is A.M.K. Amroellah. His mastery of Arabic enabled him to read classic Islamic kitab, books, and Islamic newsletters. After performing hajj in August, he began using the name H. A. M. K. Amrullah.
- 1928 Led Muhammadiyah branch in Padang Panjang.
- 1929 Became a religious teacher at Padang Panjang. Established a centre of leadership training for Muhammadiyah da'is. Married to Siti Raham binti Rasul Endah Sutan (1914-1971) at the age of 21year-old.
- 1931 Appointed Muhammadiyah Consult (*da'i*) at Makassar for 5 years.
- 1936 After about a year settling in Sungai Batang, HAMKA left his hometown again to go to Medan in 1936. During his time in Medan, he worked as an editor and became editor-in-chief of a magazine *Pedoman Masyarakat* (1935-1942), which he founded with Islamic cleric M. Yunan Nasution.
- 1939 First Publication of *Tasauf Modern* based on his articles on entry “Bahagia” (Happiness) in *Pedoman Masyarakat* magazine.
- 1941 Met with Bung Karno or Sukarno (1901-1970) in Bengkulu.
- 1942 Served with Japanese Administration.

- 1945 Opposed the return Dutch colonial power by joining and making speech (pidatos) against Dutch.
- 1946 Became Ketua Majelis Pimpinan Muhammadiyah in Sumatera Barat succeeding Saalah Yusuf (S. Y.) Sutan Mangkuto (1901-1974).
- 1947 Became Ketua Barisan Pertahanan Nasional Indonesia
- 1950 Restructuring development of Muhammadiyah at the 31st Muhammadiyah Congress in Jakarta
- 1952 Visited USA and wrote *Empat Bulan di Amerika* in 2 vols. (Jakarta: Titamas, 1953)
- 1953 Became an Advisor to Central leadership of Muhammadiyah until 1971
- 1955 Became membership in Party Masyumi. Speaker for election in 1955
- 1956 Built his family house in Kebayoran Baru (Hamka 2017: 55)
- 1958 Departed to Lahore on an invitation of Punjab University for Mu'tamar Islami (Hamka 2017: 55). Went to Azhar and gave a lecture in al-Shubban al-Muslimun, Al-Azhar. 17 February performing umrah. Granted Doctor Honoris Causa (Ustadh fakhriyyah) from Al-Azhar University at the age of 50. At the end of 1958 until January 1964, he gave lecture every morning after Subuh prayer in the mosque and began writing his Tafsir and published in *Gema Islam* from January 1960 (Hamka 2017: 64)
- 1959 Proceeded with the writing of *Tafsir* starting with Surah al-Mu'minin (juz' 18 of the Qur'an) as part of his lecture at Masjid Agung Azhar.
- 1960 The visit of Shaykh Mahmud Shaltut (1893-1963) to Masjid Kebayoran. Renaming to Masjid Agung Azhar. Partai Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia, (Masyumi) was banned.
- 1962 As senior member of the Masyumi Party, which was disbanded due to connection to PRRI rebellion, HAMKA was jailed two years because he refused to condemn his party members' involvement in the rebellion against the state that was supported by several Masyumi leaders.
- 1964 27 January he was put in prison until 1966
- 1966 21 Jan the end of "Orde Lama" of President Sukarno with the coming of the "Orde Baru." Finalizing *Tafsir al-Azhar*. The first publication of Tafsir al-Azhar was done by Pembimbing Masa Publishers, under the leadership of Haji Mahmud. The first print covers constituents vol. 1 to 4. Followed by the publication of the

juz' of 30th, while juz' of 15 to 29 were published by Pustaka Islam Surabaya. For juz' of 5 to 14, it was published by Yayasan Nurul Islam Jakarta. This Tafsir has also been published in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Currently, *Tafsir al-Azhar* is published by Penerbit Pustaka Panjimas, Jakarta. PTS in Malaysia has published the complete Tafsir of al-Azhar (Abdul Rouf; Hamka 2017: 74). Only recently in Indonesia, Muhammad Quraish Shihab (born 1944) has successfully completed his *Tafsir al-Mishbab: Pesan, Kesan dan Keserasian al-Qur'an*, 15 vols (2003), a second tafsir after HAMKA produced in Indonesia.

- 1974 Awarded honorary doctorate Doktor Honoris Causa from UKM.
- 1977 Appointed as Ketua Umum Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) on 26 July by Prof. Mukti Ali, Menteri Agama until his resignation in 1981.
- 1981 Died on 24 July 1981/27 Ramadhan 1401 at age of 73-year-old.
- 1983 Postscript: After two year of his death Hamka brother, Abdul Wadud Karim Amrullah (AWKA), aka Willy Amirul (1927-2012) converted to Christianity. He wrote an autobiography entitled *Dari Subuh hingga Malam: Perjalanan Seorang Putra Minang Mencari Jalan Kebenaran* (2011), English trans. *Sumatran Warrior: Mighty Man of Love and Courage* (WestBow Press, 2016, first published in 2011).
- 2011 Indonesian government has awarded HAMKA with the title of "National Warrior of Indonesia" (Pahlawan Nasional Indonesia).
- 2020 *Perjalanan Terakhir Buya Hamka: Sebuah Biografi Kematian* (Penerbit Panji Masyarakat, 1981) (Jejak Tarbiah Publication, 2020).
- 2023 HAMKA's biographical drama was produced in Indonesia entitled "Buya Hamka" (2023) in two volumes.

Discourses on Sufism (Taṣawwuf) in General

Ṣufism (Arabic Tasawwuf) is a "science which explains about methods of purifying a soul, improvement morality and creation of spiritual and physical well-being with the ultimate aim of attaining eternal bliss."¹ To be more clear, Abu Nasr 'Abd Allah 'Ali al-Sarraj al-Tusi (M. 378/988) cites some characteristics and natures of Sufism which are as follows: When asked about Sufism, Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Qassab--the master of

¹ Shaykh al-Islam Zakariya al-Ansari as cited by Arberry, see Pauzi Hj Awang, *Tariqah Ahmadiyah*, 11; al-Qushayri, *al-Risalah al-Qushayriyyah*, 10, n. 4.

Junayd--said, "Sufism consists of noble behavior that is made manifest at a noble time on the part of a noble person in the presence of a noble people." Furthermore, when he was asked about Sufism, Junayd said, "Sufism is that you should be with God--without any attachment." 'Ali ibn 'Abd al-Rahim al-Qannad said, "Sufism consists of extending a 'spiritual station' and being in constant union."¹

Still, Sufism has connection with spiritual dimension, commonly attached with "light". Franz Rosenthal (1914-2003) allocated a chapter entitled "Sufism: Knowledge is Light (Sufism)" to discuss Sufism as knowledge in his on *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam*.² In general, Sufism sees "Light" as the favourite concept of spiritual terminology. It is a metaphor for knowledge as distinct from the darkness of ignorance. Light was a common symbol in Biblical thought, and throughout of later Judaism and Christianity. Lights shows the way and provides guidance, as do wisdom and the religious law. In Greek, Heraclitus' idea of the inescapability of the intellectual light, Plato's myth of the cave, Aristotelian quotation describing the intellect (*nous*) as a light kindled by the deity in the soul. Neo-Platonists favouring a pervasive light symbolism. Dualistic religions centred around the opposition of darkness and light. Furthermore, the gnostic concept of the "*Pistis Sophia*" (wisdom of faith) was identified with light, its primal abode. In later Muslim mystical thought faith, knowledge and work to be identical with light.³

Rosenthal adds that light is also considered as commonplace metaphors in early Islam. The Prophet Muhammad speaking about 'light' was likely normal in Islam. For instances, commonly used are the primeval "pen" is a light, the well-guarded tablet is a light of God, the Qur'an itself was frequently referred to as a light as well the common metaphors of the light of knowledge, or knowledge and learning being a lamp in the darkness of ignorance and sin.⁴ As far as Rosenthal is

¹ See Abu Nasr 'Abd Allah 'Ali al-Sarraj al-Tusi, *Kitab al-Luma' fi Tarikh al-Tasawwuf al-Islami*, ed. 'Imad Zaki al-Barudi Maktabah al-Tawfiqiyyah, n.d), 30 (The Book of Flashes), ed. by R. Nicholson, 34-35) which can be considered as the earliest comprehensive book on Sufism. According to Professor Alan Godlas of the University of Georgia these definitions of Sufism, however, are mere signposts pointing one, see, " What is Sufism?: Early Definitions,"

<http://www.uga.edu/islam/sufism/sufismlumdef.html>, retrieved 19/4/2008)

² Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (Leiden: EJ. Brill, 1970; reprinted 2007 with preface by Dimitri Gutas)

³ Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 155-56

⁴ Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 156-57

concerned, the Qur'an employs light in many verses. Light provides guidance and is given by God, and by God alone (24: 40; 57: 28). Knowledge, guidance, and a book giving light (31: 20). A light accompanies the faithful, representing their perfect faith (66: 8). Interpreting the "verse of light" (24: 35): "... God guides to His/his light (*nurihi*) whomever He wishes ..." either to God or to the Believers for the pronominal suffix in "*nuri-hi*". Some even suggest the meaning "... the light of the believer in whose heart are faith and the Qur'an."¹

The same verse speaks expressly of "God as the light of the heavens and the earth". Interpretations: It is generally agreed the light should be interpreted metaphorically according to one of a number possibilities. It could mean the following: "guide, administrator, giver of light ("lamp" *diya*), adorer, owner of light, giver of existence, or the means for the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth of perceiving or of being perceived."² This is applied to moderate Sufis. They also understood it in a metaphorical sense as "being something immaterial as being something serving the purpose of guiding mankind."

However, a minority among Sufis incline to understand light in a literal sense. For example, al-Hallaj (858-922) understood it in a literal sense, namely God as "enlightener of the hearts," and speaking God in this connection as "the light of light, who guides whomever He wishes by His light to His power." In *Mishkat al-anwar*, al-Ghazali (1056-1111) is in favour of a literal understanding, stating God alone is "light" in reality. In fact, others are of the opposite opinion in which they believe God is not true light and their usage are only metaphors. Light is the metaphorical expression used to indicate (sense) perception and intellectual insight.

Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (1150-1210), however, refutes such a tendency to equate "light" with the Deity according to the Manichaeic doctrine that considered God as the "greatest light." However, his young contemporary, al-Suhrawardi al-Maqtul (1154-1191) applies the concept of "light" into the guiding principle of the universe in his *Hikmat al-ishraq*. He proposes everything alive was pure light and God was "the Light of lights." He possibly follows the view of Plotinus (204/5-270) including the pure light in the world of the intellect, the ultimate perfection, and constructed a coherent cosmology on the basis of the light manifestations of the first creative light (*an-nur al-ibda'i al-awwal*).³

¹ Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 157

² Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 158-59

³ Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 159-60

It is worth mentioning that Sufism has many dimensions which include knowledge. As knowledge Sufism is seen as light. Consequently Sufism is also seen as "science," that capable of giving knowledge and light. In line with this Sufism is also considered as true Islamic philosophy since the Qur'an and Sunnah are the main sources. In the same way Sufism covers two dimensions between "Philosophy" and "Mysticism." In comparison it seems that HAMKA has the same understanding as presented by Rosenthal here. HAMKA really know the position of many Sufis even though he did not clarify his position in his discourse on the "Verse of Light."

HAMKA's Discourse on Sufism

As already recognised HAMKA is a Sufi 'alim. He contributes many works on Tasawuf (Sufism) including his early well-known work *Tasawuf Modern* (1939), which was even published in Malaysia,¹ written as a serial article in a magazine called *Pedoman Masyarakat* (1935-1942). The main focus of the *Tasawuf Modern* is a discourse on happiness which considered one of the main objectives of Sufism. However, HAMKA inclines towards *Tasawuf sunni* instead of philosophy, namely practical aspects of tasawuf that deals with cleaning of diseases of soul instead of involving in philosophical/theoretical discourse, also known as *Tasawuf bid'i*.

Representing the dimension of *ihsan* in Islam, the Tasawuf which is revolves around the concept of divinity (*tawhid, ketuhanan*), i.e., a Sufi's aim is to becoming close to God instead of uniting with God. It is tasawuf of al-Junayd al-Baghdadi (830-910), the Shaykh of Sufi community (*shaykh al-ta'ifah*).² Its approach is inclusivism, by taking the society-based concern instead of antisocial personality and exclusivism.

Another important work of HAMKA on Tasawuf is his work on a historical development of Tasawuf entitled *Tasawuf: Perkembangan dan Pemurniannya* (Tasawuf: Development and Refinement).³ From the title itself, we may presume his intention in Tasawuf, namely to refine Sufism from corrupted elements. In addition, his works on Tasawuf will include *Renungan Tasawuf* (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1986), *Akhlaqul*

¹ Hamka, *Tasawuf Modern* (Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Melayu Baru, 1970); Hamka, *Tasawuf Modern* (Kota Bharu: Aman Press, 1975)

² On al-Junayd al-Baghdadi, see Muhammad Abdul Haq Ansari, "The Doctrine of One Actor: Junayd's View of Tawhid," *Islamic Quarterly* 27 (2) (1983), 83-102.

³ Hamka, *Tasawuf: Perkembangan dan Pemurniannya*, cetakan ketujuh, (n. p.: Pustaka Nurul Islam, 1978) <https://fliphtml5.com/aytbg/ahti>, also *Tasawuf: Perkembangan dan Pemurniannya* (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1983) (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 2005).

Karimah (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1992) and *Pandangan Hidup Muslim* (Kota Bahru: Pustaka Aman, 1967).

In his *Tafsir al-Azhar*, the term “tasawuf” or “tashawuf” and some of its teaching are frequently mentioned throughout the tafsir, dan these include in Surah al-Fatihah (HAMKA, Juz 1, 2, 3: 94), al-Baqarah, 154 (HAMKA, Juz 2 of al-Baqarah), Surah al-Baqarah (an Introduction to Part 3 (Juz’ 3) of Surah al-Baqarah, Juz 3: 2), Surah Al ‘Imran, 49 (HAMKA, Juz 3: 176), Surah al-Ma’idah, 120 (HAMKA, Juz 7: 103), Surah al-An’am 114 (HAMKA, Juz 8: 13), Surah al-A’raf, p. 174; Surah al-A’raf, 172 & 233, (HAMKA, Juz 12: 161), Surah Yusuf (HAMKA, Juz 12: 161), Surah al-Isra’, 85 (HAMKA, Juz?: 118-19), Surah al-Kahf, 65, 83 (HAMKA, Juz 15: 243ff), Surah al-Mu’minun, 118 (HAMKA Juz 18: Introduction, 2-3; 110-11), Surah al-Nur, an introduction to the Surah and commentary on verse 35 (HAMKA, Juz 18: 114, 194-99), al-Furqan (HAMKA juz 19: 48), al-Shu’ara, (HAMKA, Juz 19: 57), and finally in Surah al-Jathiyah, 4 (HAMKA, Juz 25: 120). What is interesting is that HAMKA had highlighted Sufism in the introduction to Part (juz’) 18, the earlier part that he had chosen to write his tafsir beginning from 1958.

No	Occurrence of the term in Surah	Place in the Juzu’ & Page
1	Al-Fatihah	Juzu’ 1: 94
2	Al-Baqarah, 154	Juzu’ 2: 154 ?
3	Al-Baqarah	Juzu’ 3: Intro., 2
4	Al ‘Imran	Juzu’ 3: 176
5	Al-Ma’idah	Juzu’ 7: 103 [on Rabi’ah]
6	Al-An’am, 114	Juzu’ 8: 13
7	Al-A’raf, 174,	Juzu’ 9: 161?, 233
8	Yusuf	Juzu’ 12: 161
9	Al-Isra’, 85	Juzu’ 15: 118-19 [Roh]
10	Al-Kahf, 65, 83	Juzu’ 15: 243ff [Kaum Shufi]
11	Al-Mu’minun	Juzu’ 18: Intro., 2-3, 110-11
12	Al-Nur, 35	Juzu’ 18: Intro. 114, 194-99
13	Al-Furqan	Juzu’ 19: 48
14	Al-Shu’ara’	Juzu’ 19: 57 [kaum Shufi]
15	Al-Jathiyah	Juzu’ 25: 120

Table 1: The Occurrence of the Term “Tasawuf/Tashawuf/kaum Shufi” in *Tafsir al-Azhar*

*Source: HAMKA, Prof Dr Haji AbdulMalik AbdulKarim Amrullah, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, 30 Juzu’ in 9 vols. (Jakarta: Penerbit Pustaka Panjimas, 1982)

Furthermore, a cursory survey will show that HAMKA’s thought has influenced the discourses on Sufism in the Malay World. His

concepts of “*Tasawuf Positif*” and “*Tasawuf Modern*” or “*Tasawuf Modern*” have inspired several monographs on the subject. Syed Muhd Khairuddin alJunied (2016),¹ for example, highlights the following studies on HAMKA's tasawuf, namely of Abdul Rouf (2012), Muhammad Zen Mansur (2013), Abdul Rouf & Mohd Yakub @ Zulkifli Mohd Yusoff (2013), and Masrur (2016).²

In addition, there are now many other studies on HAMKA's Tasawuf especially by Indonesian and Malaysian scholars and these include M. Yunan Yusuf (1990), M. Abduh Almanar (1993), Nur Hadi Ihsan (1997), Mohammad Damami (2000), Salihin (2016), Silawati Silawati (2016), Novi Ulfah & Dwi Istiyani (2017), Selamat Hariyanto (2017), Muhammad Maulana Mas'udi (2018), Azizah Rahmad & Abdul Salam Muhamad Shukri (2018), Azizah Rahmad (2020), and Achmad Reza Hutama Al Faruqi & Muhammad Izzuddin Al-Qossam (2021).³

¹ AlJunied, Syed Muhd Khairudin, “Reorienting Sufism: Hamka and Islamic Mysticism in the Malay World,” *Indonesia* 101 (2016), 67-84 https://www.academia.edu/42676330/Reorienting_Sufism_Hamka_and_Islamic_Mysticism_in_the_Malay_World, accessed 31 March 2023

² Abdul Rouf, “Dimensi Tasawuf Karya Hamka: Analisis terhadap Tafsir Al-Azhar,” Jabatan al-Quran dan al-Hadith, Akademi Pengajian Islam, Kuala Lumpur: Universiti Malaya, 2012 [published by Piagam Intan Sdn. Bhd., Kuala Selangor, 2013]; Abdul Rouf & Mohd Yakub @ Zulkifli Mohd Yusoff, “Tafsir al-Azhar dan Tasawuf Menurut Hamka,” *Jurnal Usuluddin* 38 (2013), 1-30; Muhammad Zen Mansur, “Dimensi Tasawuf dalam Tafsir Al-Azhar (Analisis Terhadap Pemikiran dan Corak Tasawuf HAMKA dalam Tafsir Al-Azhar),” Master's thesis, UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, 2013 (<http://repository.radenfatah.ac.id/6313/>) and Masrur, “Pemikiran dan Corak Tasawuf Hamka” dalam *Medina-Te. Jurnal Studi Islam* 14 (1) (2016) (Available online at <http://jurnal.radenfatah.ac.id/index.php/medinate>).

³ M. Yunan Yusuf, *Corak Pemikiran Kalam Tafsir Al-Azhar: Sebuah Telaah tentang Pemikiran Hamka dalam Teologi Islam* (Pustaka Panjimas, 1990); M. Abduh Almanar, *Pemikiran Hamka Kajian Filsafat dan Tasawuf* (Jakarta: Prima Aksara, 1993); Mohammad Damami, *Tasawuf Positif dalam Pemikiran HAMKA* (Yogyakarta: Fajar Pustaka Baru, 2000); Silawati Silawati, “Pemikiran Tasawuf Hamka dalam Kehidupan Modern,” *An-Nida'*, [S.l.], v. 40, n. 2, p. 118 -125, mar. 2016. ISSN 2407-1706. Available at: <https://ejournal.uin-suska.ac.id/index.php/Anida/article/view/1502>. Date accessed: 06 dec. 2022; Novi Ulfah & Dwi Istiyani, “Etika dalam Kehidupan Modern: Studi Pemikiran Sufistik Hamka,” *Esoterik: Jurnal Akhlak dan Tasawuf* 2 (1) (2016), 95-109

(https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315324756_Tasawuf_Modern_Studi_Pemikiran_Hamka_Haji_Abdul_Malik_Karim_Amrullah); Muhammad Maulana Mas'udi, *Ajaran Tasawuf Buya Hamka* (Surabaya: UMSurabaya Publishing, 2018) (<https://onsearch.id/Record/IOS1.INLIS00000000872830/Description#tabnav>); Azizah Rahmad & Abdul Salam Muhamad Shukri, “Hamka's Tasawuf Modern: An Outlook on Happiness,” in Akmal Khuzairy Abd Rahman, Raudlotul Firdaus Fatah

With these Indonesian studies as well as his vast books on Islam and other fields, Indonesians begin to recognise the HAMKA's name now is recognised in Indonesia.

In his study Syed Muhd Khairuddin alJunied (2016) highlights some Islamic figures that influenced HAMKA's view of Sufism, and they include Ibn al-Qayyim (1292-1350) and Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328). Both scholars "advocated a balanced approach toward Sufism, promoting neither an exultant adulation nor a deep hostility of it." However, HAMKA with his creativity took the contextualization approach in "reorienting Sufism" (*mengembali dan memurnikan tasauf*) to its origin, and objectives, resulted with positive contributions of Sufism to an individual and society. For HAMKA Sufism could be traced to the life time of Prophet Muhammad and his companions in the seventh century. He disagrees with the view of European Orientalists, Muslim reformist and modernists who believed Sufism has foreign origins.

HAMKA believes Sufism has several Islamic parameters that makes it "*tasauf sejati*" (authentic Sufism), i.e. a branch of the Shariah disciplines that aims, among others to cleanse the soul, educate and refine the emotions, enliven the heart to be inconstant prayer, and enjoin noble the character [while] suppressing greed and gluttony, battling excessive lust that goes beyond what is needed to achieve calmness. HAMKA extends his definition of Sufism as a "path that Muslims took to seek the pleasure of Allah." HAMKA then distinguishes the various branches of Sufism. The pristine form of Sufism, to HAMKA, is concerned primarily with the refinement of character, or what has been termed by scholars as "ethical Sufism." In addition, to dealing with character and behaviour, Sufism also has their devotional aspect. The devotional practices associated with Sufism, according to HAMKA, were based on the practices of the Prophet and his companions. For HAMKA, Sufis are those are able to practice all of those devotions would eventually attain true happiness (*kebahagiaan*) in this life and the Hereafter.

HAMKA was, however, critical of a few offshoots of Sufism that he saw as destabilizing Muslim spirituality from within, such as

Yasin, Nor Azira Mohd Radzi, Majdah Chulan, Azhar Abdul Rahman (eds.), *Rejuvenating Islamic Thought* (Gombak: IIUM Press, 2018), 77-91; Azizah Rahmad, "Annotated Translation of Hamka's Tasauf Moderen," unpublished PhD thesis ISTAC, Kuala Lumpur: IIUM, 2020; Achmad Reza Hutama Al Faruqi & Muhammad Izzuddin Al-Qossam, "Tasawuf Modern Menurut Hamka; Studi Analisis Terhadap Tasawuf Klasik," *Aqidah-Ta: Jurnal Ilmu Aqidah*, Department of Aqidah and Islamic Philosophy Faculty of Ushuluddin and Philosophy UIN Alauddin 7 (2021), 78-92.

philosophical Sufism (*tasawuf filosofis*). Although HAMKA disagrees with the philosophical Sufis' ideas and methods of reasoning, he was sympathetic to their goals. HAMKA's sympathy for philosophical Sufism is, however, not evident in his approach to extremist Sufis and popular Sufism especially in Indonesia, i.e., the *kebatinan* (the search for inner truth) movements. HAMKA holds Sufi brotherhoods, tariqas, in high regard as long as they adhered to the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. But still, HAMKA maintained that belonging to a Sufi order was not a necessary precondition for anyone who wished to tread the spiritual path. HAMKA sees Tasawuf as a constructive force in the Malay world. From the discussion above, it is clear that HAMKA acknowledges the importance of Sufism within Islam. He goes even further to maintain that Sufism and Sufis have been among the crucial agents in the making and remaking of Muslim societies and civilization.

AlJunied concludes the followings: Firstly, an emphasis must be placed on the positive interpretations of Sufism (*tasawuf positif*) as opposed to the negative interpretations of Sufism (*tasawuf negatif*), which must be eradicated. Secondly ideational reform that HAMKA called for was the modernization of Sufism. He used the term *tasawuf moden* (modern Sufism), in contrast to *tasawuf tradisional* (traditional Sufism). *Tasawuf tradisional* basically means a form of Islamic spirituality that is blemished with innovations, superstition, and the worship of anyone other than God. Thirdly, the main goal of *tasawuf moden* is the realization of total happiness, both in this life and the hereafter. Fourthly, HAMKA also agitated for the cleansing of Sufism from myths and legends (*tahyul dan dongengan*) and encourages the embrace of reason and intellectualism (*akal dan keilmuan*). For HAMKA true Sufism departs from the machinations of the "corruptors of Sufism." Finally, HAMKA also questioned the dichotomizing of spirituality from secular life.¹

HAMKA's Discourse on the "Verse of Light"

Tafsir al-Azhar of HAMKA was written around eighth years from 1958-1966. It is interesting to highlight that HAMKA had chosen to write his tafsir beginning from the 18 Part (juz') of the Qur'an, of which contains the Surah al-Mu'minin, Surah al-Nur and Surah al-Furqan instead an

¹ Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljunied, "Reorienting Sufism: Hamka and Islamic Mysticism in the Malay World," *Indonesia* 101 (2016), 67-84 https://www.academia.edu/42676330/Reorienting_Sufism_Hamka_and_Islamic_Mysticism_in_the_Malay_World, accessed 31 March 2023).

ordinary way, starting with tafsir Surah al-Fatihah, i.e., the opening of the Qur'an.

It is worth highlighting that in explaining the name of surah, HAMKA did mention in the introduction of Surah of al-Nur that it is taken from the verse 35 of this Surah. According to HAMKA, an analysis and Islamic philosophical thought or “tashawuf” in its deeper understanding came from this verse. He writes: This verse has given rise to various shades of interpretation and philosophical opinion in Islam or in deep Tashawuf (*Ayat ini telah menimbulkan berbagai rona tafsiran dan pendapat kefilosofatan dalam Islam atau dalam Tashawuf yang mendalam*).

This article aims at highlighting HAMKA's discourse on Sufism in the ‘Verse of Light’ of Surah of al-Nur in his Tafsir al-Azhar, the first complete Malay commentary of the Qur'an written around 1958-1966.

His Malay translation of the verse is as follows:

Allah adalah cahaya bagi semua langit dan bumi. Perumpamaan cahayaNya adalah laksana satu tanglung yang di dalamnya ada pelita, dan pelita itu terletak dalam kaca, dan kaca itu laksana bintang yang seperti Mutiara, yang dinyalakan dengan minyak pohon kayu yang Mubarak, yaitu minyak zaitun, yang bukan keluaran Timur dan bukan keluaran Barat, yang minyaknya hampir selalu menerangi walaupun tidak disentuh air; Nur di atas Nur. Allah memimpin kepada NurNya kepada barangsiapa yang dikehendakiNya. Dan Allah mengadakan berbagai perumpamaan untuk manusia. Dan Allah Mengetahui akan tiap-tiap sesuatu.” (Tafsir al-Azhar (Juzu'18 (24: 35), 194) [God is the light of all heaven and earth. The likeness of His light is like a niche for a light in which there is a lamp, and the lamp is inside the glass, and the glass is like a star like a pearl, which is lit with the oil of the blessed tree, which is olive oil, which is not from the East and not from the West, whose oil almost always illuminates even if it is not touched by water; Light upon light. God guides to His light whom He wills. And God created various parables for humans. And God knows everything.]

His Commentary of the Verse under the Subtopic of “God is the light of the Universe” (Allah Cahaya Alam).¹ In earlier work, *Tasauf: Perkembangan dan Pemurniannya* (1978), HAMKA explains the beginning of the verse 35 of Surah al-Nur: “God is the light of the Heavens and earth” which means God makes light encompassing everything both in the Heavens and earth, and this light exists in all creations everywhere. (*Tuhan adalah Nur bermaksud “jadi adalah NUR itu meliputi dan ADA pada segala sesuatu, baik di langit atau di bumi,*

¹ Prof Dr Haji AbdulMalik AbdulKarim Amrullah (HAMKA), *Tafsir al-Azhar*, 9 vols. (Jakarta: Penerbit Pustaka Panjimas, 1982), vol. ?, Juz 18: 195-99.

atau di mana saja ...). In other words, HAMKA is against any opinion God is literally the Light since he understand this verse is figurative.

It is interesting that HAMKA in his *Tafsir* did begin his commentary with four analogies. HAMKA presents an analogy of a well-prepared occasion that so much special yet if its guest of honour has not yet arrived, it has no meaning. Thus, without this guest there is no delight to that event. HAMKA adds another analogy that if any beautiful palace or house, yet the king or owner of the palace or house has died, resulted with dullness and no more majesty, though the place/house remains. Two more analogies given, first of any country will be strong if their leaders or scholars are still alive or available in an office, but if they died the spirit of people will be no more vibrant with their absence. The same is in any office, its director or now CEO will make everyone delighted and happy. Without them the whole office will be dull without any more high spirit and motivation. Such constructed analogies are delineated to demonstrate the meaning of the earlier part of the verse: "*Allah adalah cahaya bagi semua langit dan bumi.*" HAMKA accepts it is symbolic and analogous and should be not understood in a literal sense.

HAMKA further clarifies that it is not the Heavens and the earth that produce light, but light coming out of God. God creates light so that everything in the world is perceptible. A man who acknowledges God will know only through with his heart (*mata batin*). That is light. The light is coming from Allah. Man will only understand this light when he is not enslaved by materialism, worldly life and feelings of sorrows and sufferings (*penderitaan*). This light will be clear if man passes all trials in life. He will acknowledge God and his light.

This leads to his explanations of three levels of human soul, namely *nafs ammarah bi l-su'*, *nafs al-lawwamah* and *nafs al-mutma'innah*. Only through the last level man will acknowledge the Light of God. HAMKA refers to the story of tribulations faced by the Prophet his wife, 'Aishah was accused of committing adultery. The same is true to psychics of Abu Bakr, 'Aishah and Safwan in facing this test. No one ever knows the answer. But God replies through revelation after a month creates tranquillity to this nascent nation in Madinah. This tribulation solved immediately by God's answer. Thus everyone understand the concept and application of Allah is the light of the heaven and earth.

HAMKA extends the discourse of light to modern discovery of atom in which man can break atom to electron and neutron. For HAMKA, the essence of neutron is light. He exclaims the name of God,

“Allah akbar!” out of this human discovery. For HAMKA this modern breakthrough is, in fact, known for a long period. It happened in the story of Moses when he demanded to see God. God manifested in light that destroyed the mountain (tur sina). Moses fainted out of this event. HAMKA reminds the readers: Presume in your imagination that the whole world is falling apart. What is left? All that remains is Light (Nur)!" (*“Misalkan dalam khayalan bahwa seluruh alam ini hancurluluh berantakan. Apakah yang tinggal? Yang tinggal ialah Nur belaka!”*)

It happened to our prophet Muhammad when he returned from Taif after failed to convince the people there. He says: I take refuge in the Light of Your Glorious Face, which illuminates with it all the heavens and the earth, and which shines with it all that is dark. And all matters of the world and the hereafter become good because of it. In another occasion when 'Aishah asked the Prophet whether he could see Allah during his ascension to the Heaven, he used to say: "Everything is covered with Light, how much He will be able to see." (*Aku berunding kepada Nur wajahMu yang Mulia, yang bercahaya dengan dia segala langit dan bumi, dan yang bersinar dengan dia segala yang gelap. Dan menjadi baik karenanya segala urusan dunia dan akhirat. In another occasion when 'Aishah asking the Prophet either he can see Allah during his ascension to the Heaven, he used to say: “Semua diliputi Nur, betapa dia akan dapat kulihat.”*)

For HAMKA, it is very difficult for anyone to understand this aspect of light if he has never experienced worldly tribulations that hurt him so much. HAMKA gives this analogy: His heart like diamond never been washed before. Thus there is no light coming out.

For HAMKA such spirituality will never be understood. So God gives an easy example, that light like “tanglung” (*mishkat*) which produce light of the light burned with a blessed olive oil and so natural without any bias either towards east or west. HAMKA repeats the verse: Nur on Nur. Light upon light. (*“Nur atas Nur. Cahaya di atas cahaya.”*) A divine guidance is from God. It has no value except the heart opens to it. The heart is so clear when being correctly washed. So it can accept this light.

HAMKA reaches to the conclusion Islam itself is this light of God that only illuminates a shining heart. He wrote: The light of God that has been obtained by the light heart, that is Islam. Allah says: Allah leads to His Light whom He wills. (*Nur Allah yang telah didapat oleh hati yang berNur, itulah Islam. Allah says: Allah memimpin kepada NurNya kepada barangsiapa yang dikehendakiNya.* It is up to God to

favour anyone with this light of Islam.) HAMKA reminds everyone that all of this are mere analogy. It is not sufficient to know it by means of reading a comprehension and through analogies. It should only be through spiritual experience reached beyond human comprehension. Man's word cannot represent such mystical experience.

Conclusion

HAMKA is a Sufi 'alim and contributes many works on Sufism (Tasawuf) including his early well-known work *Tasawuf Modern* (1939) as well as *Tasauf: Perkembangan dan Pemurniannya* (1978). His *Tafsir al-Azhar* (1958-1966) also consists of many reference to the teachings of Sufism. As far as the verse of "Light" is concerned HAMKA's discourse shows his fully understanding of Sufi discourse as reflected throughout the history and development of Sufism.

In this "Verse of Light" highlights some aspects of Sufism in which God, prophet, religion as well as human response to it in term of knowledge and practice. In short, it is a discourse on Islamic spirituality. In line with the metaphorical verse such as this "Verse of Light," HAMKA also applies several analogies in his tafsir of this verse. He hopes that people will realise the symbolical aspects of this verse, and it should not be literally understood per se. Furthermore, HAMKA believes that such spiritual life will be more manifest if someone already tested in the life with tribulations and sufferings which at the end leads him to God.

HAMKA is of the opinion that God is the source of the Divine light which reached to the Prophet as a revelation as well as religion in order to benefit humanity, which figuratively employed as the "light" (*nur*) to the Heavens and earth. Moreover, the Qur'an uses an analogy to present this Sufi discourse in theory and practice. Last but not least, for HAMKA, Sufism is an authentic philosophy of Islam (*kefalsafahan Islam*) as well as a "science" or "knowledge" (*ilm*) in Islam.

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