CHAPTER IV
CRITIQUE ON ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI'S METHODS OF QUR'ANIC COMMENTARY

In the history of Islamic thought, emergence of Qur'anic text results the central of never ending Islamic discourse that is a centripetal and centrifugal motion. Centrifugal motion indicates that Qur'anic text has a powerful supporting energy to Muslims to interpret and develop the meaning of the verses. Which then, it encourages Muslim's intellectual odyssey. The centrifugal motion moves together with the centripetal. It means, all of Islamic discourses running for years has produced various *tafsîr* or comments for many fields of secular life problems, and the effort to make The Qur'an so much as reference as well.[1]

The emergence of text in religious tradition has really brought great effect to the development of intelligence, culture, and civilization. Civilization is formed by human dialectic and interaction to reality – by its all forming

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[1] See Hilman Latief, *Nashr Hamid, Kritik Teks Keagamaan* (Yogyakarta: eLSAQ press, 2003) p: 25

structures: economy, social, politic, and culture. The Qur'an has an important role in coloring civilization and determining characteristics and sciences well grow within the culture. Civilization and culture are formed by dialectic between human and reality in one side and by its dialogue to the text in another side.[2] Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd calls this kind of civilization as "text civilization" *(hadarah al-nash)*[3], therefore, as one of its main pivots (civilization). Indeed, commentary as another side of text – is one of its important cultural mechanisms for producing knowledge.[4]

This interpretation of text is then used by Muslim intellectuals to bring Islam to the progressiveness. Abdullah Yusuf Ali is one of those who felling responsible to change the condition, he loftily expressed his idea in a translation and commentary of The Holy Qur'an. His commentary is a way of investing good manner to Indian youths, an attempt to create a better civilization. A close relationship between Ali and his students, both in Lahore and in progressive Islamic association in London as well, made him aware of doubt which coloring young generation's attitude towards religion.

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[2] Nashr Hamid Abu Zaid, *Mafhum al-Nash, Dirâsah fî 'Ulum al-Qur'ân* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Tsaqafi al-'Arabi, 1998) p: 9
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.*

He knew that Indian young Muslims walked on intellectual crisis, they were not sure of where they stand on when they had to pass big questions- would religion restrain them from advance? Or could their religious faith be dealt with sciences? And therefore, Abdullah Yusuf Ali is an intellectual Muslim who was ready to involve too much in the discussion between religion and modern culture.[5]

Abdullah Yusuf Ali-through his works persuaded Indian young men in general and students of Islamia College in particular to welcome new thoughts.[6] It is what Abu Zayd wants of reinterpreting *turâts.* Tradition-for Abu Zayd, needs to be examined upon thinking about its living air is no more scientific. It has been much influenced by ideological interests which maintaining the hegemony of conservative thought upon text. Thus, Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd, as other

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[5] M.A. Sherif, *op. cit.,* p: 186

[6] Indian Muslims at that time were much influenced by the ideas of ascetic and *jabariyyah* in *tasawwuf* which surrendering everything to Allah SWT. According to Iqbal, the Muslim's backwardness during the last 500 years was due to the rigidity in thinking. Law in Islam has come to a static state. The conservative in Islam believes that the rationalism that caused by *Mu'tazilite* will bring disintegration and thus is dangerous for the stability of Islam as a political entity, to maintain this unity; the conservatives are running to the *shari'ah* as a powerful tool to make people submit to silence. Harun Nasution, *Pembaharuan Dalam Islam, Sejarah Pemikiran dan Gerakan* (Jakarta: PT Bulan Bintang, 2003) p: 184-185

reformist shouts up the importance of "scientific consciousness" upon tradition for fext is not more contaminated by ideological dogmatic doctrines.

In the modern sense, tradition is not a piece of history *per se,* but the most important is the backrest of the presumptions of our existence, and active influence in our stable sense of reality, and the effect that for the first time does not seem obvious, but has come into the middle we are in the form of vagueness and affects our imagination whether intentionally or not. Therefore, it is clear for us to always do the hermeneutical dialectics between our contemporary consciousnesses with the instinctive rules in our tradition. *Al-Turats* is ours, which our predecessors left behind, not to fetter our freedom and mobility but to show them and re-understand, interpret and judge from the point of our fixed attention.

Abu Zayd explains that the obvious forerunner always made dialectic of their contemporary culture and their previous culture. Through this dialogue, they are able to shape their culture and civilization, and the more widely promote their culture with the only potency. From this starting point, the dialogue between semiotics for example

(Western science) and an enforced tradition is inevitable.[7] Impasse that occurs in the mindset of Muslims can not be solved except by the dialogue arises from the consistency of our attitudes that can be a liaison for Muslims to cooperate with western culture on one side, and to cooperate with Muslim tradition understanding and its display. [8] However, Nur Kholis Setiawan reminds that we are in a dialectical dialogue conditions, and it is not enough to only adopt and adapt, but we should start from our delusion in interacting with our cultural reality in the two sides of the history and contemporary.[9]

In concerning with religious tradition, Abdullah Yusuf Ali assumed that being silence and receiving every religious doctrine and formalism will lead Muslim to backwardness.[10] So that, Yusuf Ali wrote many works as attempts to make the advance of Islam. Although his views sometimes are opposite to the conservatives', Yusuf Ali

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[7] Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd, *Isykaliyat Al-Qira'ah wa Aliyyat Al-Ta'wil* (Beirut: Al-Markaz al-Tsaqafi al-Arabi, 1994) p: 51-52

[8] *Ibid,*

[9] Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd, *Hermeneutika Inklusif, Mengatasi Problematika Bacaan dan Cara-Cara Pentakwilan atas Diskursus Keagamaan*, translator: Muhammad Mansyur and Khoirun Nahdliyin (Jakarta: ICIP, 2004) p: 4

[10] Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an; Text, Translation and Commentary* (New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2008), note: 675, p: 235

carefully delivered his mind, therefore, his works are not considered provocative or being rejected as other Indian reformist's such as Sayyid Ahmad Khan whose work has not met the approval of the *ulamâ'*. [11] Abdullah Yusuf Ali also did not want to fall into dogmatic understanding in which someone is feeling right upon his arguments.[12]

Deriving from this scientific consciousness of tradition, Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd were called to try to relive religious thoughts which seem almost fixed. Disclosing the cover of Qur'anic nobility they considered loss because its all beauties cannot be exposed. Therefore according to Nashr Hamid, literary study – with "text" as the main concept- guarantees the realization of "scientific consciousness" to reduce the domination of "ideological interest" in culture and thought.

A. Validity of Abdullah Yusuf Ali's Method in the View of *'Ulûm al- Qur'ân*

1. The Qur'an and Literary Study

The Qur'an describes itself as *risâlah* (message), and *risâlah* represents communicative connection between sender

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[11] M.A. Sherif, *op. cit.,* p: 185
[12] Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *op. cit.,* p: 118

and receiver through code or language system. As linguistic text, The Qur'an is able to be called as central text of Arabian civilization history. Thus, Qur'anic study in the way of linguistic approach is possible.[13]

The Qur'an was revealed in the middle of society that favors literary work as the best cultural products. In the early revelation, Arabic literature developed rapidly, and for the reason Qur'an is revealed in beautiful style of language in which no single text can equal or even better than it. Text is understood – in running civilization as a "miracle" out of habit, as other prophets' miracles before. The miracle of Jesus is curing disease and reliving dying one. This because the best cultural characteristic grew in the time was medical treatment. While Moses has his culture best in magic, therefore, the miracle of Moses is as well as his people's skills. And due to Arabian nation, the place where The Qur'an is revealed has its best in poetry; the miracle given to Muhammad is linguistic text which is the text of divine revelation.[14]

The beauty of The Qur'an bounced back from its linguistic composition could not be equal to other texts. This

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[13] Nashr Hamid abu Zayd, *Mafhum al-Nash, op. cit.*, p 237
[14] *Ibid.,* p: 138

beauty is what Yusuf Ali wanted to show to English readers. It therefore supported him to write a work of translation and commentary in English accompanied by various poetries in several parts of The Qur'an. It is nothing but to show the poetical side of The Qur'an.

But, what Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd means by literary study of The Qur'an is not merely making sense of Qur'anic study by beautiful poetical phrases[15], by quoting many thoughts of poets such as William Shakespeare, Tennyson, Dickens, etc, more than that, he wants to make text speaks of itself together with exegete's involvement by focusing study to Qur'anic stylistic through many tools of linguistic and *ûlum al-qur'ân* that speaks various aspects of text.[16]

In Gadamer's theory of "horizon assimilation", either of horizons, those are (1) knowledge firmament or horizon within the text and (2) understanding firmament or reader horizon must be coupled because these two horizons always involve in process of understanding and interpretation. A text reader will begin from his hermeneutical firmament, but he also notices that text has its own horizon which is possibly different from reader horizon. Both of these two horizons for

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[15] Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *op. cit.,* p: iv
[16] Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd, *loc. cit.*

Gadamer must be communicated, so that the strained situation between them can be solved.

Therefore, when somebody reads the text came from the past, he is to notice historical horizon where the text firstly appeared, expressed and lettered. So, understanding text means letting text speak up. Reader horizon, for Gadamer has role to be the starting point of text understanding. This starting point is not to force reader to make understanding follows it, on the contrary, it should help what actually text wants is. Here is the association between reader subjectivity and text objectivity, in which the later is specialized.[17]

Abu Zayd, deriving from the theory said that the study of The Qur'an in its stylistic level-without paying too much attention to its religious aspect is main target which should precede other goals and interests. It just after finishing its literary analysis, whoever has right to object his interest to the text. [18]

Amin al-Khuli has ever said that an exegete will colour the text (even more literary text) by his view and

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[17]Dr. phil. H. M. Nur Kholis Setiawan, *Akar-Akar Pemikiran Progresif dalam Kajian Al-Qur'an* (Yogyakarta: Elsaq Press, 2008) p: 71
[18] Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd, *op. cit.,* p: 10

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understanding, because one who understands an expression is actually determines (by himself) the level of thought of the expression. He does it following his thought level and his intellectual firmament, because he cannot pass over his own personality. He will catch nothing from the text except what he can reach through his intelligence. How far his intelligence will execute his ability to examine and explain the text. Thus, for him, the exegete himself extracts and binds the text, defines the terms and produces sense of terms following his ability of thinking. It shows clear when the language (allegorical and hermeneutical senses) really helps him producing the meaning. Thus, his full attempts of commentary will develop well through the analysing tools he has.[19]

Indeed, the interest of those two figures to linguistic and literature brings them to linguistic and literary approach upon The Qur'an. For Abu Zayd, *mufassîr* / exegetes work in the scope of language and Qur'anic science. Qur'anic science has a strong connection to text because these sciences speak many aspects of it. While linguistic and its branches are important to study its whole linguistic text. Exegete should

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[19]Amin al-Khuli and Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd, *Metode Tafsir Sastra* (Yogyakarta: Adab Press, 2004) p:45

know first the forms of morphology and semantic, relation between words and its signified, and change and derivation (its conjugation). Those are sciences related to vocabulary. And *second,* he must study the rule of *nahwu, I'râb* and *balaghah.*[20]

2. Analysis of Abdullah Yusuf Ali's Methods of Qur'anic Commentary

Long time before Abu Zayd proclaiming linguistic interpretation, Abdullah Yusuf Ali has firstly applied linguistic studies in understanding text of The Qur'an. Yusuf Ali is one leader of modern India who has a great interest in literature. This makes his work is thick with literary style.[21] Several approaches used in understanding the verse are semantics, phonology and semiotics. It's just very unfortunate that Yusuf Ali was not always consistent to use of these approaches in every verse, it is because he only commented the verse sections were deemed appropriate explanation. As original meaning of commentary, his interpretation was done

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[20] Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd, *op. cit.,* p: 237

[21] Abdullah Yusuf Ali's preference to art came from the exercise he has ever had as classical art expert. He retained his love of ancient Greek artifacts. Yusuf Ali's own artistic temperament finds its expression in poetry. This big preference of literature attracted him to translate and interpret al-Quran into English beautiful words.

very partial because he chose only certain parts to be interpreted

First approach he used is semantic approach as a tool to understand the text. It is analytical study of linguistic key words by a view to come finally in conceptual understanding of the people who use that language.[22] This view is not merely media of talking and thinking, but more importantly, it is concept and interpretation of covering world.

One thing agreed in various schools of semantics in the spectrum of contemporary linguistics is distinction between basic meaning *(grunbedeutung)* and relational meaning *(relational bedeutung).* Basic meaning meant here is contextual content of vocabulary constantly sticks in the word although it is separated from speaking contextual sentences. While relational meaning is connotative meaning practically depends on context and its relation to other vocabularies in sentence as well.[23] This semantic approach is shown clear in Abdullah Yusuf Ali's notes about "*wajh*",[24] where its literal meaning is "face", but connotatively implies "countenance or favour, honour, glory, Presence (as applied

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[22] Dr. Phil. H. M. Nur Kholis Setiawan, *op. cit.,* p: 88

[23] Dr. Phil. H. M. Nur Kholis Setiawan, *al-Qur'an Kitab Sastra Terbesar* (Yogyakarta: eLSAQ Press, 2006) p: 166-167

[24] Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *op. cit.,* p: 57, note: 114

to God), cause, sake, the firs part, the beginning, nature, inner being, essence, self, etc" . The literal meaning of "*wajh*" will develop and extend into meaningful meaning when it connects to the concept of Islam and then placed in strong relation to important Qur'anic vocabularies.

Other example is about *"shabr",* Abdullah Yusuf Ali explained that there are several alternative meanings: (1) patience in the sense of being thorough, not hasty; (2) patient perseverance, constancy, steadfastness, firmness of purpose (3) systematic as opposed to spasmodic or chance action (4) a cheerful attitude of resignation and understanding in sorrow, defeat or suffering, as opposed to murmuring or rebellion, but saved from mere passivity or listlessness, by the element of constancy or steadfastness.[25] Also *Nafs* in Q.S. al-Nisa':1 means (1) soul, (2) self, (3) person, living person, and in Q.S. al-Nisa': 4 implies (4) will, good pleasure.[26]

Further, Abu Zayd said that there are deeper semantic dimensions within the text. It needs "mental-intellectual" or "logic" in facing the text. The dimensions need *ta'wîl*[27] after

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[25] *Ibid.,* p: 28, Note: 61

[26] *Ibid.*, p: 178, Note: 504

[27] Ulama 'have different opinions on the definition of *ta'wîl*, among them make it the same as *tafsîr*, but there are those who draw distinction between them. Among those who distinguish said: (1) *tafsîr* is

mufassîr-through his scientific tools explore the whole possible meanings expressed from the study of those sciences. Once more, *tafsîr* and *ta'wîl* are two different terms. *Tafsîr* needs medium *(tafsîrah)* in form of religious science and linguistic which are not necessary in the process of *ta'wîl*, due to *ta'wîl* starts from the meaning resulted from process of exegesis. The former produces "meaning" and the later produces "significance".[28]

An effort to interpret a text is not limited at the field, whether text in the field of *fiqh* and law or other field of text because *ijtihâd* is based on "logical reasoning' to penetrate

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explanation for words; it is in mind to understand and in oral expression to show. While *takwîl* is something that is in reality (not in the mind); (2) *tafsîr* is what has been clear in *kitâbullah* or (definitely) in a *saheeh sunnah* because its meaning is clear. While *ta'wîl* is what the scholars concluded. "Because of it, partially ulama 'said: "*tafsîr* is what associated with *riwâyah* and *ta'wîl* is what associated with *dirâyah.* (3) *tafsir* is more widely used in explaining *lafadz* and *mufradât*, while *takwîl* is more widely used in explaining meaning and sentence structure . Manna 'Khalil Qattan, *Mabâhis fî Ulum al-Qur'ân*, p: 327. In this study, according to the definition given by Abu Zayd, the interpretation is an explanation and clarification that aims to provide knowledge or understanding about the Qur'an to explain the meanings, taking its legal rules and understanding its basic reasons. Commentary explains the outside of the Qur'an while *ta'wîl* refers to the explanations of hidden meanings in the Qur'an. Moch. Nur Ichwan, *op. cit.*, p: 80

[28] Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd, *op. cit.,* p: 237

the depth of text.[29] It indicates that all verses of The Qur'an have the same possibility to be interpreted. Depart form three idea of Qur'anic textuality, Abu Zayd concludes that text is historical phenomenon and therefore has its own specific context. It is "cultural product"[30], "linguistic text", "historical text", and "human text",[31] so that, reading to all aspects of text is possibility, either from *muhkamât*[32] aspect which is understood as clear and real and is text backbone so that does not need *ta'wîl* or *mutasyabihât* which is understood as ambiguous, it needs *ta'wîl* by the guidance from *muhkamât* verses.[33]

It is interesting to examine the commentary of Abdullah Yusuf Ali about those two terms. He had one word

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[29] *Ibid.,* p: 238

[30] *Ibid.,* p: 27-28

[31] Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd, *Naqd al-Khitâb al-Dîn*, (Kairo: maktabah madbuli, 1995) p:126

[32] There are several opinions about the definition of *muhkamât* and *mutasyabihât* verse: (1) *muhkamât* is an easy-known verse meaning, while *mutasyabihât* only God himself knows the meaning; (2) *muhkamât* is verse contains only one face, while *mutasyabihât* contains many faces, (3) *muhkamât* is a verse that the meaning can be detected directly, without requiring other information, even *mutasyabihât* is not in the case; it requires explanation by referring to other texts. However, despite the different opinions, those opinions above refer to one definition that *muhkam* the obvious meaning while *mutasyabih* is a verse that still requires explanation. Manna 'Qattan, *op. cit.,* p: 216

[33] Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd, *op. cit.,* p: 178

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with Abu Zayd that both of *muhkamât* and *mutasyabihât* have possibility to be interpreted. *Muqatta'at* letters for a part of scholars are *mutasyabihât* which only God knows, but for Ali, those letters are symbols that should be uncovered.[34]

Yusuf Ali stated those meanings by analysing more the characteristics of letters through phonological study. As in Q.S. al-Baqarah: 1, A.L.M. A is the breathing and comes from the throat, L is a lingual-palatal-dental sounds from the middle of the mouth, and M is labial or lip-sound. A.L.M is as symbolical of the Beginning, Middle and End. They are symbol to the *sûrah* which treats specifically of Life, Growth, and Death-the Beginning and the End of human spiritual journey.[35]

The particular letter A.L.M are found prefixed to Q.S. al-Baqarah, Q.S. al-Imran, Q.S. al-Ankabut, Q.S. al-Rum, Q.S. Lukman, Q.S. al-Sajdah. In Q.S. al-Baqarah and Q.S. al-Imran, the argument is about the rise and fall of nations, their

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[34] There are some differences of opinion regarding these *muqatta'at* letter: (1) a part of *mufassir* determined that letter of muqatta'at is the name of surah, each surah can be identified by the abbreviated letters in the beginning of surah (2) the letters are oath of God as if He sworn by the whole letters of *muqatta'at,* but enough to mention some of it; (3) The letters are taken from the nature of Allah the Almighty which covers all properties listed on the opening of surah. Muqata'at is one abbreviated science among the Arabs.   Ibrahin al-Ibyariy, *Pengenalan Sejarah al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: CV. Rajawali, 1998) p: 22

[35] Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *op. cit.,* p: 17, note: 25

past, and their future in history, with ordinance for new universal people of Islam. In Q.S. al-Ankabut, a similar argument about nations leads off to the mystery of life and death, failure and triumph, past and future, in the history of individual souls. The burden of Q.S. al-Rum is that God is the source of all things and all things return to Him. In Q.S. al-Lukman and Q.S. al-Sajdah, the same lesson is enforced: God is the Creator and he will be the Judge on the last day. There is therefore a common thread, the mystery of Life and Death, Beginning and End.[36] It is necessary to know that phonological study is applied by Yusuf Ali to only abbreviated letters *(muqatta'at)* only.

Another example about *mutasyabihât* verse is Q.S. al-Maidah: 60, that apes and swine are allegorical: those who falsified God's scripture became lawless like apes and those who succumbed to filth, gluttony or gross living became like swine.[37]

Text consists of distinctive and ambiguous verses. It was important text mechanism to transfer reading to positive matter to contribute in producing meaning of text. In the terminology of literary criticism theory, it states that text

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[36] *Ibid.*
[37] *Ibid.,* p: 262, Note, 770

consists of parts called semantic "keywords" which makes reader possibly enter into text world and catch secret and ambiguous matter, because producing meaning is corporative work between text and reader, and therefore, this activity is changeable following number of reader in one side and reading "situation" in another side.[38]

Above all, Yusuf Ali argued that it is wrong to claim a monopoly for God's message. It is the same for all people and in all ages. Renewal of message and the birth of a new people, a new symbolism and new ordinances become appropriate and they are now expounded.[39] Thus, rereading upon text is really necessary. For him, verses are nothing but symbol, thus, the containing meaning should always be explored. It covers not only *mutasyabihât* verses, but also *muhkamât* which for people has clear meaning; it for Ali still probably has larger meaning.[40]

Expanding the meaning of the *muhkamât* verse as he means can be seen in his interpretation of Q.S al-Nisa ': 15, which for the majority of scholars' it speaks about adultery for which the punishment has been replaced by Q.S. al-Nur: 2

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[38] Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd, *op. cit.,* p: 178
[39] Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *op. cit.,* p: 56, Note 139
[40] *Ibid.,* p: 123, Note 347

with 100 stripes, but for Ali, this is about crime (sexual relations) between two women as unnatural relationship between men in the Q.S. al-Nisa ': 16. And considering that the similar crime is very embarrassing and should not exist in a regulated society, and then the highest form of penalty is life imprisonment.[41] Or when he made a distinction with the majority of scholars' by saying that men do not always inherit the legacy of the case may be twice that received by women.[42] And about the *Rîba* that he did not define with reasonable profits, not by way of legitimate trade, outside of loans in the form of gold and silver as well as food items of goods such as wheat, barley *(sya'ir),* dates and salt (according to the names called by Rosulullah SAW). The definitions also include making excessive profits on all kinds of goods, but excluding the credit in the economy, as a result of modern banking and financial system.[43]

A step that might be considered in line with expectations of Abu Zayd is that Yusuf Ali has been trying to get a new message, with moving from the "meaning" text to the "significance" in its socio-cultural context. Although this

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[41] *Ibid.,* p: 183-184, Note: 523-525
[42] *Ibid.*, p: 181, Note 516
[43] *Ibid.*, p: 111, Note 324

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movement is not the same as that of Abu Zayd. As the same as Yusuf Ali, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd also believes that the banking system, including interest, is not associated with usury, but giving the profits (*fawaid* or *arbah)* to the depositor.[44]

The movement of the "meaning" to "significance", for Abu Zayd can only be obtained from analysis discourse and semiotics. In analysis discourse, text is defined as a system that produces the meaning of linguistic signs, as in semiotics, the text covers all kinds of sign system which produce meanings.[45] With the understanding derived from Hirsch, Abu Zayd said that the meaning is the meaning of which was presented by the text and the significance is what appears in the relationship between meaning and the reader. The meaning is "contextual meaning of the original, which was almost steady (fixed) because of its history", while the significance is changeable.[46]

And by assuming that the world is full of symbols that the meaning must be captured by the human means Abdullah

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[44] This opinion is consistent with the opinion of al-Ashmawi above and the opinion of Fazlur Rahman as well. Fazlur Rahman argues that usury is growing at a "double." Interest in modern banking is not in the case. Moch. Nor Ichwan, *op. cit.,* p: 129

[45] *Ibid.,* p: 68

[46] *Ibid.,* p: 89

Yusuf Ali has started to apply semiotic theory as one of the basic of his commentary. For Ali, the world is a symbol, he said: *"spiritual things can only be understood by symbols taken from things which are familiar to us in this life. In a sense this fleeting life itself is a symbol. The reality lies behind it"*.[47]

For him, the world is full of symbols, and the wise will know that there are essences and illustrative sheath given to the essence, throughout the book.[48] Forms or ideas or original patterns, according to Plato's mystical doctrine as developed in the "Republic", can also be compared with "the names "or the nature and the characteristics of things that God taught to Adam.[49] The whole of this phenomenal world is a symbol. Reality lies behind them like the light that lies behind the cave, in Plato's theory of ideas.[50] Such intellectual preoccupations encourage Yusuf Ali to look for the symbols in the verses of The Qur'an. As when he says that fish in Q.S. al-Kahf: 61 is a symbol for secular knowledge.[51] And the sun

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[47] Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *op. cit.,* p: 592, appendix VI
[48] *Ibid.*, p: 123, Note 347
[49] *Ibid.*, p: 343, Note: 996
[50] *Ibid.*, p:592-500, appendix VI, note: 1584
[51] *Ibid.*, p: 747, Note 2408

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is reference to a mystical sense.[52] *Ka'bah* as a symbol of future goals,[53] there are many explanations about the references of the Qur'an in water and light[54] and abbreviated letters or *muqatta'at.* [55]

According to M.A. Sheriff, esoteric approach is not no desire to return and read The Qur'an with a clever way to open many doors to great truths,[56] for example: "posture in prayer is symbolic of the attitude of mind, and behavior in general living, and the movements, it also refers to the changes, which the human spirit is tested and given a trial as trained body while standing, bowing, kneeling and prostration in prayer ".[57] His commentary includes impressive sentences that invite readers to recognize in the "Book of Nature", the phenomenal world, "the hand of God's compassion and generous ruler." There are so many signs of God, "in the world, in nature, in human hearts, in the revelation",[58] if we learn of such signs with the right spirit,

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[52] *Ibid.*, p: 607, Note 1827
[53] *Ibid.*, p: 60, Note: 154
[54] For references to water refer to note 3107, regarding the symbolic meaning of light see appendix VIII (Mystic Interpretation of the Verse of Light) and notes in 2997 and 3001
[55] Appendix I and the introduction to *surah* Yusuf
[56] See M.A. Sherif, *op. cit.,* p: 182
[57] *Ibid.,* p: 972, Note 3235
[58] *Ibid.*, p: 1180, Note 3993

we will be able to understand the most precious lessons for our spiritual lives.[59] The conclusion is that "instead of God's Creation has no higher purpose. That is not the vanity or just game".[60]

This world, for Ali, is full of symbols that the meaning should be expressed, as former history is also a symbol that has a very deep message. One that must be considered is that symbol is different from sign. Symbol refers to an object that no logical relations between them and are arbitrary. While the absolute characteristics of symbol is the absence of logical relation between symbol and what is symbolized. In terminology of Saussure "there is not logical motivation (unmotivated between *"signifie"* and *"signifiant"*, or there is not direct relationship between the symbol mandatory with its being symbolized).[61]

That way, Yusuf Ali's methods do not meet the criteria applied by Abu Zayd about interpretation theory. System of *"signified"* and *"signifier"* that was promoted by Abu Zayd is the semiotic system of De Saussure. Sign

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[59] *Ibid.*, p: 1315, Note 4573
[60] *Ibid.*, p: 894, Note 2950
[61] Ahmad Zaki Mubarok, *Pendekatan Strukturalisme Linguistik dalam Tafsir Kontemporer ala Syahrur* (Yogyakarta: eLSAQ Press, 2007) p: 93-94

language (language unit) does not show "something" but to "certain mental concept". Mental concept is called "*signifier*". *"Signifier"* is not something to be said or written symbols, but the "sound image", that is the psychological effect which left by a voice that was heard or written symbols. In other words it is voice delineation in the heart.[62]

Yusuf Ali's assumption that all kinds are symbol, according to writer, is the effect of his great interest in philosophy. By adopting Plato's "ideas",[63] Yusuf Ali has much brought the style of philosophical interpretation; he

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[62] Moch. Nur Ichwan, *op. cit*. p: 88

[63] To explain his theory, Plato makes an analogy, saying: "Human being is analogically as those who are arrested-since their first born in the cave. Behind them is blazing fire, while they are facing the wall of cave, some of servants walk in front of the fire bringing various goods, It creates shadows reflected on the wall. Due to the arrested men cannot look what behind them, they only watch the shadows. They suppose that the shadows are reality which no other realities are existing, yet, after one of them is free, he sees the fire blazing behind them, in the gate of cave. He starts to know that what they see before is not reality. He then comes out side; he sees the sun lightens his eyes. He assumes that he leaves the reality. Yet, slow and down he realizes what he never sees before. He turns to the cave. He tells them that what they see is not the real reality, but shadows". This myth explains that cave is the analogy of visible world. Many people are those arrested men. They receive the experience spontaneously. But, there are some people who suppose that visible reality is none but shadows. Thus, to gain the real truth, people should let their selves free from that sense misleading influence. The real truth is not created, but is exist in world mind. Prof. Dr. Ahmad Tafsir, *Filsafat Umum, Akal dan Hati Sejak Thales sampai Capra, pengantar kepada Fislafat untuk Mahasiswa Perguruan Tinggi* (Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya, 2003) p: 57-58

brought it to commentator's ideology, one thing that Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd really wants to avoid. On one hand, the process of commentary of Abdullah Yusuf Ali covers what Abu Zayd wants by capturing the significance of the verse, but there's no denying that Yusuf Ali has involved his ideology too far.[64] By restricting the study of language, especially philology,[65] he has factually closed the text from disclosure of hidden meanings that can possibly be understood deeper. Actually, the commentary of Abdullah Yusuf Ali has two tendencies. He is a thinker who has an interest in two different things at once, philosophy and mysticism. His big interest in philosophy is shown in his commentary which much refers to philosophers thought like as Plato, Aristotle, Nietzsche, etc. And meanwhile, he is also interested in Sufism. His review talks more about mystical interpretation and adopts the Mystical Sufism.

However, his interest in philosophy gives more influences to him, like his poetry below:

> "And many new streams of wisdom were poured
> through the crucibles

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[64] In general, Abu Zayd uses the word ideology "to refer to the bias, interest, orientation, the tendency of ideological, political purposes, pragmatic, and religious beliefs. Moch. Nur Ichwan, *op. cit.*, p: 83

[65] In his foreword, Yusuf Ali admitted that he limited the use of grammatical and philological notes. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *op cit.,* p: v

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of noble minds,-Prophets, Poets, preachers, Philosophers, and thinking men of action" [66]

Yusuf Ali is a liberal modern figure, but then, he had great respect for the previous scholars'. The most distant step taken by Yusuf Ali is his critic on traditional science by warning of "formalism of the deadly"[67] and "the excesses of the doctrine."[68] He also did not want to be dogmatic, because truth is relative. But the concept of "relative" truth, according to Abu Zayd, is to be understood as the relativity of "cultural", not "substantial" relativity , here, looking for the "truth" means finding the truths contained in our culture, not to seek the absolute truths. Others-in the cultural sense may see in our tradition other truths which they had taken from the standpoint of their own culture. However, such a thing should not destroy our cultural view of the truth. In this regard, scientific studies-particularly in charge of analyzing the humanities disciplines based on the perspective of the cultural system is associated with it. [69]

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[66] *Ibid.,* C.10 p: 3
[67] *Ibid.,* p: 69, Note 177
[68] *Ibid.*, p: 233, Note 675
[69] Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd, *op. cit.,* p: 18

3.   Problem of Stories

The stories in The Qur'an, although already passed since hundreds or even thousands years ago, but its presence is not without wisdom. Because these stories according to Ali are symbols of knowledge and learning for human being.[70] But Abu Zayd places the *Qashahsh al-Qur'ân* in the bottom layer of the core sciences of The Qur'an, in addition to the science of *kalam* and *fiqh*. Although it is lower than other sciences such as linguistics, which is a shell of science in understanding the text, and science of *ma'rifatullah* in the core layer, but the science is still relating to Qur'anic studies.
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While Abu Zayd placing *Qashash al-Qur'ân* in the bottom layer of science, Yusuf Ali, in fact gave such great attention to the stories of the past. He adopted much

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[70] Among the benefits of Qur'anic stories are: (1) Explaining the principles of *da'wah* and explaining the points of *syari'ah* brought by the prophets, (2) plucking up Rosulullah about the religion of Allah, strengthening Believers' trust about the triumph of truth and its followers and destruction of digression and its defenders; (3) confirming the previous prophets, turning against them and perpetuating the memory and legacy trail, (4) showing the truth of Muhammad in preaching about people who passed along the span and generation; (5) uncovering lies of people of the book with reasons from their own books before those information were changed. (6) The story is one form of literature that could attract the attention of listeners and strengthen the messages they brought into the soul. K. Manna Qattan, *op. cit*. p: 307

[71] Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd, *op. cit.,* p: 262

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information from the sources of Jewish and Christian teachings, and from various researches on the stories of the past. Because for him, these stories represent symbol that contains many lessons. And this is fair considering Yusuf Ali's review that emphasizes on spiritual dimension and moral resurrection message.[72]

The stories of The Qur'an tells about people who run the seclusion and the disobedient, al-Ghazali explains that the condition of those who undergo seclusion are the stories about the prophets and saints, like as story of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Harun, Zakariya, Yahya, Jesus, Mary, David, Solomon, Jonah, Lot, Idris, Khidzir, Shoaib, Ilyas, Muhammad, Gabriel, Michael, and etc. While the condition of those who deny and protest are the stories about Namrudz, Pharaoh, 'Ad, the people of Lot, the Tubba', ashabul aikah, Mecca pagans, the pagans, devils, demons and others. This section is useful to frighten, warn, and give lessons. It also simply covers the mysteries, symbols, and signals that need to think long. [73]

Unfortunately, in commenting the verses of the previous race, especially about Jews and Christians, Abdullah

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[72] M.A. Sherif, *op. cit.,* 178
[73] Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd, *op. cit.,* p: 267

Yusuf Ali used the data sources of both religions excessively, further, not all stories are followed by adequate explanations, so the common reader will have difficulty in distinguishing which Islamic teachings and which are not. Among the verses he understood by those traditions is a story about legend of the Jews and Arabs (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 60), the legend of the Jews (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 65, 259), the legend of Christian nations (Q.S. al-Imran: 49 , 18, 9), the legend of the Arab nations (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 125, 158, 189, 194, 196, 197, 198, 200; Q.S. al-A'raf: 65, 73, 85; Q.S. Hud: 59) and Persian legend (Q.S. 110).

For writer, Abdullah Yusuf Ali's large attention in using those resources was affected by his educational background and environment. The young Yusuf Ali was registered in the Free Church of Scotland but was later transferred to the Wilson School, a school led by a pastor, John Wilson. Finishing school in the Wilson School, he continued his studies at Wilson College. His close relationship with non-Muslims such as Roland Wilson, Mackichan, Lely, George Birdwood, Knyvet Roland Wilson, and his wife Teresa was eventually made him familiar with the source of their sacred teachings.

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In addition to the life and educational backgrounds, Abdullah Yusuf Ali was also fond of history; even he was very fond of studying ancient Greek artifacts. So his review has sufficient even more historical data of the past. Preoccupation of Abdullah Yusuf Ali in displaying the historical facts, which many took from the sources of other religious teaching shows his inconsistency of his initially statement that taking Jewish's or Christian's sources is the way of Illustration only, not in the direction of incorporating such beliefs or systems.[74] However, what he did is more than just adopting the stories that do not exist in The Qur'an, because he also tried to link the story of The Qur'an and the traditions. On one hand, Yusuf Ali did show the function of the story as a lesson to the people afterwards, but on the other hand, he just stuck in preoccupations, saying too much those stories and forgetting the significances.

Actually, there is a methodology between The Qur'an, the Torah and the Gospel in telling story. The Qur'an in general, globally and concisely argued as intended only to provide teaching materials *('ibrah)* for humans, while the Torah and the Gospel bring it in detail, regarding the perpetrator, time or place. Both of these books explain verses

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[74] Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *op. cit.*, p: xi

associated with a history of human life, one thing that is not contained in The Qur'an. When willing a more detailed knowledge about the stories, the Muslims asked them who considered know better. The Arab presumption of both communities is very reasonable considering detailed descriptions of those stories are in their hands. Then there was communication between the Arab society, Jews and Christians.[75]

A part of classical *Mufassîr* used these narrations in interpreting the stories of The Qur'an.[76] Although, unfortunately, they are sometimes less careful sorting correct *(sahîh)* narration, so many previous interpretations were satisfied by *israililiyyât* narrations that can not be accounted for.

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[75] Drs. Rosihon Anwar, *Melacak Unsur-Unsur Israiliyyat dalam Tafsir al-Thabari dan Tafsir Ibnu Katsir* (Bandug: CV. Pustaka Setia, 1999) p: 39-40

[76] Among the benefits of Qur'anic stories are: (1) Explaining the principles of da'wah and explaining the points of syari'ah brought by the prophets, (2) plucking up Rosulullah about the religion of Allah, strengthening Believers' trust about the triumph of truth and its followers and destruction of digression and its defenders; (3) confirming the previous prophets, turning against them and perpetuating the memory and legacy trail, (4) showing the truth of Muhammad in preaching about people who passed along the span and generation; (5) uncovering lies of people of the book with reasons from their own books before those information were changed. (6) The story is one form of literature that could attract the attention of listeners and strengthen the messages they brought into the soul. K. Manna Qattan, *op. cit.* p: 307

In his introduction, Yusuf Ali, criticized those who graced The Qur'an with tales of Jews and Christians, he said:

> The increasing knowledge of history and Jewish and Christian legend enabled the commentators to illustrate the text of the Holy Book with reference to these. Sometimes the amount of Jewish stuff (some in absurd), which found its way into the commentaries was out of all proportion to its importance and relevance, and gave rise to the legend which has been exploited by polemical Christian and Jewish writers, that Islam was built upon an imperfect knowledge of Christianity and Judaism, or that it accepts as true the illustrative legends from Talmud or the Midrash or various fantastic schools of Christianity.[77]

From the above statement, it is clear that Yusuf Ali was not consistent with his words. He himself through his attitude that many pointed to the information from these sources, in fact, strengthened the Jewish and Christian belief.[78]

Yusuf Ali Abdullah stuck himself in their ideology.

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[77] Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *op. cit.,* p: XVI

[78] Many orientalists argue that the Qur'an a lot marked with the Jewish /Christian vocabularies and teachings. Abraham Geiger (1810-1874) in his essay *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen* concludes that the Hebrew vocabulary gave too much influence on the Qur'an. The words contained in the Qur'an as tabut, taurat, jannatu 'and, jahannam, ahbar, darasa, rabani, sabt, etc come from the Hebrew language. Other Orientalists who also pointed out that the Qur'an adopted many Jewish and Christian sources are Theodore Noldeke, Siegmund Fraenkel, Hartwig Hirschfeld, Charles Cutley Torrey,

It can not be denied that Yusuf Ali was affected by the dominance of his own ideology. One thing that is opposed by Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, what done by Ali is coloring *(talwîn)* text with other religious traditions. He tended to force the text to speak about what he wanted. The use of Jewish and Christian resources in interpreting Qur'an for Syuhbah and Abdullah Abu 'Ali Ja'far is included in the category of using *israiliyyât*. [79]Abdullah Ali Ja'far defines *israiliyyât* as information derived from people of the book explains passages of the Qur'an or *Hadîth*. While Abu Syuhbah defines it more specifically with the knowledge that comes from the Jews and the Christians contained in the gospels, the Gospel explanations, stories of the prophets and others.[80]

One thing that was not done by Yusuf Ali is, although he did not deny the urgency of tradition as explanatory of The Qur'an, he did not cite many *hadîth* of the prophet, except in a very minimal capacity. Lack of quoting *hadîth* implies lack

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Friedrich Schwally, Richard Bell, Arthur Jeffery, etc. their writings are most critics of Muhammad as the man who compiled the Qur'an by adopting the stories of Jews and Christians recklessly. Adnin Armas, M.A, *Metodologi Bibel dalam Studi al-Qur'an, Kajian Kritis* (Jakarta: Gema Insani, 2007) p: 131-149

[79] Drs. Rosihon Anwar, M.Ag, *op. cit.,* p: 26-27

[80] *Ibid.*

of using *asbab al-nuzul, asbab al-nuzul* is interpreted as general condition of Arab society at that time. Thus, instead of using the specific reasons for interpreting verse, Yusuf Ali described only the general condition of society at that time. Therefore, he often refers to *Sîrah Nabawi*.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali did not want to emphasize the study only at certain events because The Qur'an is not descended to a nation only, but applies to all times. That way, Abdullah Yusuf Ali held the rule of *al-'ibrah bi 'umûm al-lafdz la bi khushûsh al-sabab*.[81]

For Abu Zayd, discussing the meaning of texts through the dualism of "generality" and "specific reason" is actually contrary to the nature of the relationship between linguistic text and reality that produces text. It because producing text lasted through the medium with autonomic certain rules, they are thought and culture.

Then, emphasis on one side of text meaning is very dangerous at the level of religious texts because it would lead to contradictions that can not be separated in the text. Contradictions arise due to exclusion of "special things" (occasion of revelation) for "general" (understanding). Actually, the issue on "generality" and "specificity" should

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[81] See Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *op. cit.,* p: xi-xii-xviii

not ignore the "special cause". Because, despite having large possibility in abstraction and generalization, language still remains a unique cultural system. Therefore it is very possible for general words having special meaning.[82]

Asbâb al-nuzûl is an important and fundamental thing to find the meaning and significance; it does not mean that the meaning is stopped at the level of symbolic of unique particular events. This conception contains such reality ignoring elements that language and text has a unique mechanism for expressing the reality and culture. Abu Zayd trying to emphasize the "uniqueness" dimension within the meaning of the text that disclosed by *asbâb al-nuzûl,* it because the general tendency in religious thought is ignoring this dimension for the "general word", whereas the meaning of the text is the result of the interaction in the process of text formation and creation by two aspects: language and reality.[83]

Asbâb al-nuzûl always involves the transmission as the only way to get text historicity. And the lack of *asbâb al-nuzûl* in Yusuf Ali's commentary indicates that he involves

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[82] Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd., *op. cit*., p: 107
[83] *Ibid.,* p: 109

very little tradition which Abu Zayd called as a secondary text or commentary on the primary texts (The Qur'an).[84]

4. Interrelated Verse (Verse Relevancy)

Basic thought of verse interrelation *(munasabah al-ayat)* is that text is a structural unity whose parts are interrelated. The task of *mufassîr* is to find these relationships – connecting one verse to others in one side, and one *sûrah* to others in another side. Therefore, to disclose such relationships requires the ability and sharpness of exegete's vision in capturing the text horizon. According to Abu Zayd, *munasabah* has various characteristics, there are general, specific, rational, perceptive or imaginative. This means that the "relationships" is the possibilities that must be determined and uncovered by exegetes.

Revealing the relationships between verses and *sûrah* does not mean explaining the relationships that exist inherently in the text, but it makes the relationship between exegete's mind and text. Relationships between texts can be disclosed through these relationships. Here, the effort to discover certain relationships by an exegete is based on some existing text, while the relationships with other patterns by

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[84] Moch. Nur Ichwan, *op. cit.,* p: 68

other exegetes based on the other text data. Thus, exegete revealing the dialectic of each parts of text trough his dialectic to text.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali passed this rule very well. He did not make the parts of The Qur'an but as explanatory for each other text. Like as his review in Q.S. al-Baqarah: 150. He said that the verse sentence is enhanced by the Q.S. al-Baqarah: 151. The argument is that in the grant of *Ka'bah Qiblah*. God was perfecting religion and fulfilling the prayer for the future made by Abraham. That prayer was threefold: (1) that Mecca should be made a sacred sanctuary; (Q.S. al-Baqara: 126), (2) that a truly believing (Muslim) nation should be raised, with places of devotion there (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 128), and (3) that an apostle should be sent among the Arabs with certain qualities. (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 129).

In addition to obtaining the verse relationship, Abdullah Yusuf Ali also found the relationship between chapters *(sûrah).* He connects between Q.S. al-Baqarah and Q.S. Al-Imran by saying that both have in common because taking general view of the religion history of mankind, with special reference to the people of the book, proceeds to explain the birth of the new people of Islam and their ordinance, insists on the need of struggle and fighting in the

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cause of truth and exhorts those who have been blessed with Islam to remain constant in faith, pray for guidance and maintain their spiritual hope for future.[85]

B.   Evaluation of Work of Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Abdullah Yusuf Ali's work is a phenomenal work that has been read by international worldwide. Its style of language is so beautiful and orderly so much praised. And records of his commentary are quite helpful to understand the verses of The Qur'an.

In addition to poetic translations and commentary, which are considered new from Abdullah Yusuf Ali are verse numbering system and the classification of *rukû'* into more specific parts. To refer to this division, Abdullah Yusuf Ali called "sub-division of *rukû'*".

This sub-division is characterized by larger font size with bold printed letter in initial letter of translation. The classification is easy for mapping a too general theme. He divided Q.S al-Imran into 20 divisions. These twenty divisions then are divided into some sub-divisions. The second division for example is divided into two, *first,* Q.S. al-

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[85] Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *op. cit.,* p: 121

Imran: 10-13 about people of the book and, *second*, 14-20 about believers.[86]

In addition to terms of numbering, the other positive side is that Yusuf Ali tried to contextualize[87] readings with a growing socio community circumstances. He provided many examples that can be directly applied in everyday life. In this case Abdullah Yusuf Ali worked twice. *First*, finding the possible meaning and, *second,* finding appropriate illustrations that can be understood easily by readers.

Following classification done by Ignaz Goldziher, the work of Ali is categorized into *Al-Tafsir fi Dlau'I al-Tamaddun al-Islami* or modern exegesis in which the central themes are about reformation and how Islam motivates to make a progress in culture by proclaiming the free thinking

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[86] *Ibid.,* p: 124-127

[87] According to Noeng Muhadjir, contextual terminologically covers three definitions: (1) an attempt of making a sense as the way of anticipating general urgent problems, therefore this term is the same as "situational", (2) making a sense through referring relevancy to the past, present, and future, in which everything is seen from the perspective of its previous meaning, its present functional meaning, and its future relevant possible meaning, and (3) getting the relevancy between the central (Qur'an) and peripheral (its application). Besides, the last also means making the Qur'an as the central of morality.

and releasing unquestioning acceptance.[88] While following the categorization of J.J.G. Jansen, the work of Yusuf Ali is classified into *practical exegesis* which relates to people daily problems.[89]

Abdullah Yusuf Ali's Commentary is a simple interpretation in which it used interrelation of meaning among verses in The Qur'an. Interrelation among verses as well as *sûrah* is well used to explore the meaning.

Actually, assessing a work is not easy, because it requires the existence of the terms or conditions that become benchmark / standard that must be used to see whether the work is feasible to be consumed or not. In some regards about the methods of interpretation, the writer cannot generalize that Yusuf Ali used a particular approach because Abdullah Yusuf Ali did not translate every part of The Qur'an with the same method for each verse. Only parts that are important are interpreted with explanations that take not sufficient place in his work.

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[88] Abdul Mustaqim, *Aliran-Aliran Tafsir, Madzahibut Tafsir Dari Periode Klasik Hingga Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta: Kreasi Wacana, 2005) p: 20

[89] J.J.G. Jansen, *Diskursus Tafsir al-Qur'an Modern* (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana 1997) p: 158

In his explanation, Yusuf Ali sometimes only revealed a semantic aspect which is the first step in varying alternative meaning that can be derived from the original word. After gaining semantic meaning he sometimes developed it to search for a new significance from the meaning, but sometimes it just stops on a variant reading of the meaning without getting any significance. In other case, Yusuf Ali tried to find the significance without passing the preceded phase of studying the semantic aspect of the text. Referring to the theory of Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd, what Yusuf Ali did is reading of a leap, because he tended to directly come to interpretation *(ta'wîl)* without studying its linguistic aspects deeply. Without focusing study on aspects of language means that Yusuf Ali's commentary – in the interpretational glasses of Abu Zayd has allowed his personal subjectivity involved so far in the reading. And it is true that his personal inclination towards mysticism and philosophy coloring results of interpretation.

In addition to these two aspects, Abdullah Yusuf Ali is also still influenced by Shiite theology. This can be seen clearly when he interpreted Q.S. Al-Imran: 140, Q.S. al-Nisa ': 69, Q.S. al-Shaffat: 107, commentary of Yusuf Ali about these verses show that Abdullah Yusuf Ali was clearly very

touched, like any good Muslim of any school of thought would be, by the history and significance of the martyrdom of Imam Hasan and Husayn.[90]

Because one reason of writing this work is to improve Indian youth morality, moral beauty is very clearly reflected on his work, so great with the beautiful words as a result of his deeply contemplation for nature and life. That way, Yusuf Ali preferred to focus on showing the messages of The Qur'an by creating a poetic prose and analyzing its language in greater detail through devices of modern linguistic science.

Lack of citing tradition also indicates a lack of use of *asbâb al-nuzûl* as one aspect of understanding the text. For Nasr Hamid, linguistic meaning is not logical meaning, because the words get their meanings through structural and contextual relationship. Ignoring one of its sides makes exegete difficult to reveal the meaning. Giving focus only on the structure of language without considering the cultural context will plunge us into a closed analytical error.[91]

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[90] In explanation of those verses, Yusuf Ali often mentioned the two imams with a great respect. The Amana edition is different from the original, and the IFTA edition has further deletion. Both the revised editions have deleted the reference related to these two imams.

[91] Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd, *op. cit.,* p: 108

In addition to those all above, the weakness of Yusuf Ali's methods also looked at his inconsistence to initial statement about the use of Jewish's sources and Christian's in understanding stories of previous race. He was actually much pointed to narrations of people of the book's teaching resources. What factually only looking for data to complete the story of The Qur'an.

The original goal of stories in the Qur'an is actually as described by al-Syarbashi, quoted by Drs. Rosihon Anwar, M. Ag, *"the stories in the Qur'an is not intended as a complete description of the life history of nations or particular individuals, but as an object lesson of humanity."[92]* The Qur'an does not emphasize on penetrator of the story, but advice and example behind the story. But it seems disappear in Yusuf Ali's work. It is right that sometimes Yusuf Ali forgot the significance of a story. He importantly focused to describe the story with a variety of information from other religious teachings.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali so much appreciated the literature. He wrote poems, arranged them in the most appropriate place in The Qur'an, cited many words from very

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[92] Drs. Rosihon Anwar, M.Ag, *op. cit.,* p: 46

well known poets but never used the previous poem of *Jahiliyyah.* Whereas poetry is an Arab ontology, and so, it is necessary to define the difficult words of The Qur'an. Again the writer says that the sense of "Literary" terminology is different for these two figures. For Ali, literary is used to show the beauty of Qur'anic stylistic in English beautiful words, but "literary" for Nashr Hamid is an approach to grasp the best understanding of The Qur'an.

Based on the criteria of interpretation drawn by Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd, the commentary of Abdullah Yusuf Ali is giving inadequate significance to the field of Qur'anic study. His commentary is really partial for that giving not sufficient information. His much touched too his ideology is of course opposite to the free ideology-interpretation shouted so much by Abu Zayd. The jumping interpretation – without paying attention to much to text linguistic aspect is a kind of not valid interpretation because a valid interpretation should pass three phases of reading. The first is *qira'âh 'âdiyah* which is common reading second is exegesis or *tafsîr* aims to gain meaning and the third is interpretation or *ta'wîl* which is meaning of meaning.[93]

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[93] Moch. Nur Ichwan, *op. cit.*, p: 80

For writer herself, the work of Abdullah Yusuf Ali gives valuable contribution for the triumph of Islamic science. His translation as many people consider gives the best meaning to the original words because it has a close meaning to its original Arabic. Only, the commentary he arranged to explain the meaning of the verse needs to be taken into account because it involves not powerful methods of Qur'anic commentary.