

## The Rules of Interpretation: How Do *Al-'ām* and *Al-Khāṣ* Applied in Shihab's Exegesis?

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### Abstract

Shihab is a scholar who has produced a comprehensive 30-chapter exegesis entitled *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*. In interpreting the Qur'an, he had applied several rules that had driven him towards commenting the verses. This kind of rule is also adopted by the other exegetes to ensure their exegeses are in line with the Islamic law. Therefore, this study seeks to analyse the rules of interpretation applied by him which focuses on the discussions of *al-'ām* (general) and *al-khāṣ* (specific). To get a proper conclusion, this study has adopted the document analysis method by making language scriptures and venerated exegeses as the main sources of reference. This is to ensure that the rules that he had employed can be analysed perfectly and also consistent with the conclusion made by the scholars. The study found that Shihab had applied seven rules related to general and specific in his methodology, and the rules have been affirmed by both scholars and exegetes.

**Keywords:** rules of interpretation; general; specific; rhetoric; exegesis; Arabic

### 1. Introduction

The expansion of the interpretation's rules was done by fellow scholars since the early emergence of the Qur'anic sciences; even the birth of various religious disciples in reality has been supported by the motivation to understand the Qur'anic verses. Some of the classic scholars have discussed the rules of interpretation, including al-Zarkashī who wrote *al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, and al-Suyūṭī with *al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*. Nonetheless, the studies on this subject have long been acknowledged before the two scholars did.

According to Shihab (2011), Ibn Taimiyah is the pioneers of this science who had produced the book of *Muqaddimah Uṣul al-Tafsīr*. This was then followed by al-Kāfiyājī who wrote *al-Tafsīr fī Qawā'id 'Ilm al-Tafsīr*. The writing after then has since expanded with the introduction of several works, among which are *al-Qawā'id al-Ḥisān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* by al-Sa'dī, *Uṣul al-Tafsīr wa Qawā'iduhu* by al-Āk, *Qawā'id al-Tarjīḥ 'Inda al-Mufasssīrīn* by al-Ḥarabī, *Qawā'id al-Tafsīr Jam'an wa Dirāsah* by al-Sabt, *Mabāḥith Fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* by al-Qaṭṭān, and in the introduction of *Maḥāsīn al-Ta'wīl* by al-Qāsimī.

However, the rules that have been laid out by the scholars are not found to be similar in concept. Al-Sa'dī (1999) for example was inclined to expand the rule in general, through some religious understanding like the Islamic law and theology. Meanwhile, al-Suyūṭī, al-Qaṭṭān, and al-Sabt have elaborated on this further. Other than that, the attitude and views of some scholars on the interpretation's rules are somewhat different. Some opine that the rule is binding and must be followed by other exegetes. Some have an opposing view about it, other than it serves as a guideline for any exegete. In this case, there is another view that as the exegesis is an effort that is always evolving, at par with social, knowledge, language development and so on, and then the rules of interpretation can be measured as a work guideline. As far as

this is concerned, the rule does not force other exegetes to use the same guideline, but all exegetes have the right to use a different guideline by leaning on methodological framework assigned. In other words, the rules of interpretation are very important as guideline to exegetes so that the exegeses produced are objective, academic and can be held accountable.

Hence, in this vein, this decent article focuses on the study on the rules of interpretation employed by M. Quraish Shihab (Shihab is used in place of his full name) in his *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* that relates with the science of rhetoric. This science describes a great, clear meaning which can exert such a beautiful influence in the soul, and its every verse relevant with the context and also suitable to be used for the addressees (al-Jārim & Amīn, 1998). Thus, the Qur'anic rhetoric can deliver some noble values to mankind and appropriate with the place and situation, so much so that their wit and conscience succumb to the values. It discusses three important sciences, and they are *al-Ma'ānī*, *al-Badī'* and *al-Bayān*.

To get a better explanation, the article only discusses on *al-'ām* and *al-khāṣ* (general and specific) both of which are included in the substantial discussion in the science of *al-Ma'ānī* by applying document analytical approach. In this context, elaboration on rules of interpretation terminology and the notion of *al-'ām* and *al-khāṣ* will be made, and then the level of validity of the interpretative rule used is analysed, one which relates with both the terms in *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*. However, to gain perfect comprehension, this study begins to discuss the development of *tafsir* in Indonesia and Shihab's brief biography.

## 2. The Development of *Tafsir* in Indonesia

An effort of translation and interpretation of the Qur'an in the archipelago has long been explored by Indonesian exegetes. Muhammad said that the process was complete since the 17<sup>th</sup> CE or 11<sup>th</sup> AH, and starts from this century until many years later are considered as the first stage, while since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> until now as the second stage. At the first stage, *tafsir* occurs based on the interpretation of texts in Arabic only, such as *Tarjuman al-Mustafiq* by al-Fansuri from *Tafsir Al-Baiḍāwī* in the 17<sup>th</sup>, and *Terjemah Jalalayn* by KH Bagus Arafah Solo from *Tafsir al-Jalālayn* in the early of the 20<sup>th</sup>. In the second stage, mostly based on the Qur'anic verses, such as *Al-Quran dan Terjemahannya* by the Indonesian Ministry of Religion in 1965, and also based on its commentary in Arabic, such as *Tafsir al-Jalalayn* by Mahyuddin Shaf in 1990 (Lubis, 2002). In addition, Abdullah (2002) adds another book that was created in the first stage, namely *Mirāḥ Labīd* by Shaykh al-Nawawī al-Bantānī.

Referring to the second stage above, this study found two different eras, before Indonesian Independence (1900-1945) and after (1945-present). The production of *tafsir* before independence will know as the Middle Ages, and the scholars' efforts to interpret the Qur'an completely persistence even Indonesia was still being colonized by foreign powers. Their methodologies at this level absolutely differ from the period before (classical) or after independence (modern). At that time, during the people of Indonesia are still facing fierce resistance from the foreign invaders, exegetical approaches were influenced certainly in interpreting some of the Qur'anic verses. The books of *Tafsir* that have been written on this era, such as: *al-Furqan* by A. Hassan Bandung (1928), *Tafsir Hibarna* by Iskandar Indris (1934), *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim* by Halim Hassan et al. (1936), *Tafsir al-Qur'an Bahasa Indonesia* by Mahmud Aziz (1935), etc.

Other than that, this study found many books which grow and develop in the second era (after independence). Although its stylistic of writing is still using the old Indonesian spelling, such as *Tafsir al-Qur'anul Karim* by Mahmud Yunus (1950), *Tafsir Al-Quranul Al-Karim* by Fachruddin and Zainuddin Hamidi (1959), *Tafsir al-Quran Al-Hakim* (1960) by Kasim Bakry, *Al-Ibriz* by Bisyrī Mustafa Rembang (1960), *Tafsir Al-Azhar* by HAMKA (1967), *Tafsir Al-Bayan* by Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy (1971), *Al-Huda* by Bakri Shahid (1972), etc. Likewise that has been using a new Indonesian spelling as *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* (2002) by Shihab.

*Tafsir Al-Mishbah* is a complete Qur'anic exegesis containing the whole 30-chapter and consists of fifteen volumes books. It was written while he was still the Indonesian Ambassador to Egypt and was completed within four years. He started to write it while in Cairo on Friday, 18 June 1999. The book was completed by him in Jakarta on Friday 5 September 2003, spending an average of more than seven hours per day. It was printed for the first time in November 2000 by Lentera Hati publisher in Jakarta starting from volume 1 to 10. Hence, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* in specifically is the latest exegetical work by Indonesian exegete that continues to be referred by the preachers, lecturers and students at universities either in Indonesia or in Malaysia. In fact it was serving as an object for continuous research by the scholars till today.

### 3. Shihab: A Great Indonesian Exegete

Shihab was born in Rappang, South Sulawesi on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1944. His early education was obtained from his father, Abdulrahman Shihab. His love towards the Qur'an blossomed from the age of six (Shihab, 1992). As a son of a famous exegete, he was often brought by his mother to attend religious classes given by his father. His mother also sparked his interest, as her constant encouragements and guidance resulted in his decision to further his studies in the same field (Naja, 2007). Other than his parents' early involvements at home, he also studied at Pondok Pesantren Darul Hadith al-Faqihyyah, Malang. Soon after, in 1958 the state of Sulawesi awarded him a scholarship to study at the University of al-Azhar, Cairo, Egypt, and he was accepted to move up to the second grade of *thanawiyah* al-Azhar. His academic journey later took him to the Department of Theology, University of al-Azhar majoring in *Tafsir* and *Hadith*. He completed his bachelor degree in 1967. Two years later (1969), Shihab (2011) managed to obtain a master degree in the same field.

In 1980, Shihab furthered his Ph.D degree in the same university. He completed his study in two years and obtained *mumtāz ma'a martabah al-sharaf al-ulā* grade (exemplary scholar with outstanding performance). His outstanding results qualified him as the first South East Asian student to obtain a Ph.D degree in Qur'anic sciences from al-Azhar University (Subhan, 1993). The process of intellectual growth experienced by Shihab for 13 years at the University of al-Azhar shaped his form of thought. In addition, he is also known as a religious figure, educator and also have his own publication house, Lentera Hati Publisher.

Al-Darrāz (1991) has stated that a scholarly work could not escape seven points, namely: a totally new article, completing the incomplete, explaining the vague and difficult, summarizing the long, updating the mixed, purifying the wrong and collecting the scattered. According to Ibrahim & Usman (2013), Shihab does all these things well, and even links the limitations which often happen when someone wants to clarify the terms of Islamic scholarship in Arabic into Indonesian language quite successfully. Therefore, there is no doubt that this Indonesian scholar is named a credible and respectable expert in Qur'anic exegesis.

### 4. The Rules of Interpretation: Linguistic Basis and Functions

The rules of interpretation in Arabic language is a combination of two words namely *qawā'id* (rules) and *al-tafsir* (exegesis). *Qawā'id* in the language viewpoint according to al-Azharī (1964) and Ibn Manzūr (1996) is defined as the foundation. Al-Kafawī (1998) on the other hand defined it as pillars for everything above it, whereas Muṣṭafā et al. (1960) defined it as foundation or pillars analogous to a building, or carry the meaning of something that is thorough in nature that encompasses every part. The rule terminology, according to al-Fayūmī (1990) is defined as a general summary that encompasses the whole parts. On the other hand, al-Sabt (2001) defined it as a general stipulation by which provisions associated with the details were known.

According to al-Jurjānī (1985) and al-Fairūzabādī (1986), the definition of *al-tafsir* from the aspect of language is explaining something and making it clearer and more distinct, or uncovers something hidden. However, in terms of terminology, al-Zarkashī (1988) defined it as a set of knowledge employed to have the best understanding of the Qur'an which was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), clarifying its meaning, extracting rulings of Islamic law and wisdoms contained in it with the aid of linguistics, Arabic grammar, Principles of Jurisprudence, reasons of the revelation, and the abrogation and abrogated.

Based on these definitions, it can be concluded that what is meant by the rule of interpretation is a set of ruling which is universal in nature, used by exegetes as a guideline to reach to the study of the meanings of the Qur'an and knowing the procedures to get its wisdoms.

### 5. The Notion of *al-'Ām* and *al-Khāṣ* in Qur'anic Rhetoric

The science of *al-Ma'ānī* examines the state of the word or utterance in terms of the suitability with the purpose intended (Ḥusain, 1977). It is based on the policies and the rules of utterances conveyed according to the suitability to the public as the recipients. The purpose is to avoid committing errors of meaning the way it is intended to be delivered by the addresser until it becomes understandable to the addressee (al-Hashīmī, 1960). In brief, it can be concluded that *al-Ma'ānī* means knowledge which discusses the position of the utterance that is in line with a given situation.

One of the important debates in this knowledge is *al-'ām* and *al-khāṣ*. *al-'Ām* means the utterance in which it shows a general comprehension according to the actual meaning, but confined by the number and not showing a certain number (Ṣāliḥ, 1988). al-Suyūṭī (1996) defines it as an utterance that covers all the things that are deemed suitable and the number infinite. This is the same with al-Qaṭṭān (1992) who defines *al-'ām* as the utterance that covers every one

without limit. Based on the definitions, it can be understood that what is implied by *al-‘ām* is the utterance in which the meaning is comprehensive and not confined by anything at all.

*al-Khāṣ* means the utterance used to show a certain thing (Khallāf, 1947). It also means every utterance used to show one meaning on several familiar meanings, either in its type, similarity (*naw’*) or reality (*‘ayn*) (al-Khān, 1969). Al-Qaṭṭān (1992) defines it as an utterance that does not cover any meaning deemed suitable to it, and without any limitation. Based on this, it is understandable that what is meant as *al-khāṣ* is an utterance used to define a certain meaning either referring to someone, similarity or reality of something.

## 6. The Application of *al-‘Ām* and *al-Khāṣ* Rules in Shihab’s Exegesis

In line to the notion above, some scholars have been in unison on the rules of interpretation which relate with both, as to ensure that one’s exegeses does not deviate. Shihab as one of the exegetes in the Archipelago also applied general and specific rules in his *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, such as:

1. RULE: Every *al-‘ām* utterance will stay with its general meaning until there is evidence that shows otherwise.

This rule, otherwise has been stated by al-Rūmī (1999) which means that when a Qur’anic verse contains multifarious of meanings, then the exegesis must be based on these diversity of meanings, so much so that the evidence shows otherwise (specific meaning). The best example of this rule is presented when Shihab (2010) interprets *sura al-Balad* (The City) verse 3 as follows:

*“And [by] the father and that which was born [of him]”.*

Shihab (2010) states that the utterances of *wālid* (father) and *walad* (son) have adopted the indefinite form (*al-nakirah*), as long as these utterances are in this form, then it cannot assign the meanings to something definite. It is even reasonable if we generalise it, which encompasses everything confined by the utterance.

Based on this exegesis, the words of *wālid* and *walad* do contain general meanings due to the use of the indefinite form. The utterance will always be understood as having general meaning until there is a strong argument that is able to specify the meaning of both. Other than that, this study found that Shihab’s exegesis is also put forth by exegetes on their books. For example, al-Ṭabarī (2001) states that *wālid* and *walad* have a general meaning, and they are not allowed to provide any specific meaning to both, unless we are presented with an acceptable argument by way of narration and scholar. Unfortunately, there has been no narration or indicator from the scholar that has specified the meaning. Therefore, it will always contain a general meaning, the way Allah has intended to make it an indefinite form.

Nonetheless, there are some of the exegetes who have specified the meaning for the verse above. Ibn ‘Aṭṭiyah (2001) has mentioned that Mujahid understands it with the meaning of Adam AS and his generation, several narrations of exegesis have pointed it to Noah AS and his entire descendants, Abū ‘Imrān al-Jūnī opines that the meaning denotes Abraham AS and his entire descendants and Ibn ‘Abbās narrates it with a more general perspective. Al-Sa’dī (2000) for instance, interprets it to refer to Adam AS and his generation. Ibn Kathīr (2000) also strengthens the meaning by justifying that when Allah had sworn by *Umm al-Qurā* or Mecca, which happens to be a dwelling area, Allah had also sworn by the people at the time, which was Adam AS and his people. And Abū Sa’ūd (1994) defines it as representing Abraham AS his entire people.

In order to that case, the best way is to determine the meaning of the verse is in general. There are three reasons for this: First of all, whether the prophet Adam AS, Abraham AS or Noah AS, they all fall under one meaning which is human. Secondly, from a linguistic perspective, *wālid* and *walad* are two generic nouns in the indefinite form proving that the meaning is general. Thirdly, interpreting with a general meaning is supported by a rule of interpretation that has been decided by al-Rūmī (1999) above.

2. RULE: When indefinite noun is placed in a string of negation or question, then the meaning will be general.

This rule is emphasised by al-Sabt (2001) which means that when there is an utterance that takes the general form in the context of conversation, either among the negation (*al-nafy*), prohibition (*al-nahy*), condition (*al-shart*) and interrogation (*al-istifhām*), then the entire meaning becomes general.

In reference to the rule, there are four conditions under which the utterance of the indefinite noun is to be understood with a general meaning, if one of them is found in the string of the verse. Thus, this study found that Shihab (2010) has only applied two of these in his exegesis and they are:

- i. Indefinite in the context of negation. One example is when Shihab (2010) interprets *sura al-Sajdah* (The Prostration) verse 17 as in the following:<sup>1</sup>

*"And no soul knows what has been hidden for them of comfort for eyes as reward for what they used to do".*

Shihab (2010) states that the utterance of *nafs* (soul) for the verse above uses indefinite noun put forth in the form of negation, where it means all the souls. Thus, this study establishes that the exegesis is also stated by al-Sa'dī (2000) in his book.

- ii. Indefinite placed in the string of interrogation. One example is when Shihab (2010) interprets *sura Maryam* (Mary) verse 65 as follows:

*"Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them – so worship Him and have patience for His worship. Do you know of any similarity to Him?"*

Shihab (2010) states that the phrase *hal ta'lamu lahu samiyyā* (Do you know of any similarity to Him?) means a question that contains a contradictory meaning. Allah has the right to take the title, and no one else can do so. Allah is entitled to attain the absolute perfection and there is no other name and attribute that are grander than His.

Based on this exegesis, it can be understood that the utterance *samiyyā* uses an indefinite noun in the question. Therefore, Shihab has interpreted it using a general meaning that the entire name and attribute of Allah cannot be compared with any other name and attribute. Other than that, Sayyid (1992) in his book is also strengthening Shihab's exegesis above.

3. RULE: An utterance addressed to someone from a group of people, it covers every individual in the group, except any evidence showing that the utterance is specifically directed at someone in particular.

This rule has also been mentioned by al-Sabt (2001) which means that the one individual mentioned in the context of the verse covers other individuals, except for a condition in which there is a clue that proves that the meaning is only made specific to the individual mentioned.

The rule of is exemplified when Shihab (2010) interprets *sura al-Mumtaḥanah* (She that is to be examined) verse 1 as shown below:<sup>2</sup>

*"O you who have believed, do not take My enemies and your enemies as allies, extending to them affection while they have disbelieved in what came to you of the truth, having driven out the Prophet and yourselves (only) because you believe in Allah, your Lord...".*

Shihab (2010) states that in actuality, those evicted from their own lands are only the emigrants (*al-Muhājirīn*) and not the helpers (*al-Anṣār*). However, He had decreed *yukhrijūna al-rasūl wa iyyākum* (having driven out the Prophet and yourselves) which is addressed to all Muslims. This is because the Muslims have been seen as sharing one body, what will befall some of them, will also be shouldered by the rest of them.

Based on this exegesis, it can be made clear that the emigrants are the ones evicted from their country. However, the rule above states that the speech addressed to someone so it covers others as well, unless there is other evidence that has specified it. For that reason, the helpers are also included in this verse. It is even meant for all the Muslims, as they are seen to share one body, it seems, where what will happen to some is shared by others. This study found that al-Biqā'ī (1992) also interprets the phrase above in a general meaning.

4. RULE: When there is an utterance in the beginning of the verse that uses a specific form and then finalised with general form, then the specific utterance at the earlier part of the verse does not obstruct the general meaning formed, and vice versa.

This rule is also mentioned by al-Sabt (2001) and al-Zarkashī (2000) which means that that every phrase of the verse must be understood based on the meaning it has and not influenced by other phrases unless there is a strong argument that can be used to understand it based on the other phrases mentioned.

In this matter, if there is a phrase in one verse that contains a specific meaning and other phrases contain a general meaning, then every phrase must be understood based on their respective meanings. Shihab (2010) applies this rule by interpreting *sura al-Jumu'ah* (The Congregation) verse 5 as follows:

<sup>1</sup> Also see Shihab's exegesis which applied this rule in suras *al-Baqarah* 2: 48, *al-Mā'idah* 5: 54, *al-Aḥzāb* 33: 4, *Fuṣṣilat* 41: 46, *al-Qamar* 54: 49 and *al-Ḥadīd* 57: 22.

<sup>2</sup> Also see Shihab's exegesis which uses this rule *sura al-Munāfiqūn* 63: 1 and *al-Taḥrīm* 66: 4.

*"The example of those who were entrusted with the Torah and then did not take it on is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]. Wretched is the example of the people who deny the signs of Allah..."*

Shihab (2010) states that although this verse is decreed in the mode of condemning the Jews, the above verse also talks to all the Muslims who are mandated with the Qur'an. As they do not seem to learn and practise what is preached to them, it can be said that the verse is decreed as a reminder to the people.

It can be understood from the exegesis that the phrase *alladhīna ḥummilu al-tawrah* (those who were entrusted with the Torah) at the beginning of the verse refers to the Jews, as they are granted with the scripture of Torah. Despite that, the utterance *al-qawm* (people) at the end of the verse has general reference, which refers to all the people of Muhammad (pbuh) to whom the Qur'an is passed down. Therefore, the specific meaning that refers to the Jews does not limit the utterance of *al-qawm* to be understood with a general meaning, indicating any people or groups that do not practise what has been dictated in the Qur'an, and this works the same way with the Jews (like mules carrying big scriptures but not knowing at all the content of what they are carrying). Other than that, there is no evidence or solid argument which allows for the meaning of *al-qawm* on this verse to only apply to the Jews.

Based on this, the interpretation is also agreed by the exegetes, as found in 'Āshūr (1984), Abū al-Sa'ūd (1994), and al-Rāzī (1981) in their exegetical books.

5. RULE: Utterance which does not use *ṣīghah* (form) referring to the feminine, covers both male and female.

This rule is stated by al-Sabt (2001) which means that in Islamic customary law it is determined that if the law is mentioned without using a feminine term, then it would encompass both male and female.<sup>3</sup> This is because the masculine-indicated term is more dominant than both masculine and feminine combined (Abū 'Abdillah, 1973). Shihab (2010) uses the rule while interpreting *sura al-Taḥrīm* (The Prohibition) verse 6 as follows:<sup>4</sup>

*"O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones..."*

Shihab (2010) states that the verse above depicts that preaching and education must begin from home. Although the verse is addressed for male (father) redactionally, it is not solely meant for them. The verse refers to both men and women (father and mother) as is the verse that is intended for both sexes (for example, verses that command the Muslims to perform fasting). Therefore, a parent is responsible for his or her spouse and children, just as he or she is accountable for his or her own actions. The father or the mother alone will not stand that strong to build a household complete with religious values and supported by a harmonious relationship.

It is understandable from the exegesis that the phrase *yā ayyuha alladhīna āmanū* (O you who have believed) has a general meaning, which refers to both sexes. Although in terms of the redaction and the form of verse which function is to order, the verse is specified to male, or a husband who has full responsibility towards his family members.

Nonetheless, this verse is intended for both the same way for other verses which adopt a *ṣīghah*, an example would be the verse that orders the people to perform fasting from *sura al-Baqarah* verse 183 intended for men and women. Thus, parents are responsible for their children and also to their respective spouses, similar to the fact that they are responsible for their own actions. A household will not be formidable if the parent works towards it alone, let alone to instil religious values and good relationship. On the same note, the study found that this interpretation is also mentioned by al-Biqāṭ (1992) in his book.

6. RULE: If there is a condition, exception, clauses of time, modification or signal with *dhālika* after a certain word or verse, then the meaning refers to generally, except with the presence of indication showing partially.

Again, this is stated by al-Sabt (2001) which means that if there is a verse which uses a general form and followed by an utterance which contains either one of these meanings: condition (*al-sharṭ*), exception (*al-istiṭhnā*), clauses of time (*al-ṣifah*), modification (*al-ghāyah*) or even sign that uses the adverb meaning far (*al-ishārah bi dhālika*), then the meaning refers to general, unless there is an evidence which indicates other meanings. Thus, a clearer elaboration can be given as follows:

<sup>3</sup> Al-Sabt (2001) also states that the words which refer to male and female are divided into four, namely: First, word which specifically refer to a single person and not otherwise such as *rijāl* 'man' for masculine and *nisā* 'women' for feminine. These meanings cannot be referred to anything else except when there is a proposition. Second, words that refer to both but do not use the *tadhkīr* or *ta'nīth* signs, such as *al-nās* 'people', *al-ins* 'human' and *al-bashar* 'man'. Third, the words that include both and are not specifically refer to anything else except when accompanied by explanations, such as *mā* 'what' and *man* 'who'. Fourth, the words that use the *ta'nīth* sign for feminine and was eliminated for masculine, such as *muslimīn* and *if'alū* for masculine, and *muslimāt* and *if'alna* for feminine.

<sup>4</sup> Also see the application of this rule in Shihab's exegesis in *sura al-Taḥrīm* 66: 10.



- i. The existence of the condition that specifies the meaning on the verse of a general form. An example is when Shihab (2010) interprets *sura al-Mujādalah* (The Pleading Woman) verses 3 and 4 as shown below:<sup>5</sup>

*"And those who pronounce zihār from their wives and then (wish to) go back on what they said – then (there must be) the freeing of a slave before they touch one another. That is what you are admonished thereby; and Allah is Acquainted with what you do. And he who does not find (a slave) – then a fast for two months consecutively before they touch one another; and he who is unable – then the feeding of sixty poor persons..."*

Shihab (2010) goes on to add the punishment for the offenders of *zihār*<sup>6</sup> must be done before the husband consummates with his wife for the purpose of asking him to repent and perform the deed, so that his lust gets to be channelled. The verse states that people who would like to remove the *zihār* to continue his relationship with his wife as it is before *zihār*, he is obligated to free a slave. The obligation serves a guidance and lesson for you so that you will not repeat the mistakes. However, if a husband is not able to do it if he is poor, then it is compulsory for him to fast for two months in a row in a proper manner before both consummate. This is also not affordable to do, due to a permissible excuse, it is compulsory for him to feed 60 impoverished people with each one of them has had a fulfilling meal (also before both consummate). These two have to be done before consummation.

Based on this, it can be summed up that the phrases *fa man lam yajid* (who does not find) and *fa man lam yastaṭī'* (who is unable) function as a requirement which specifies the generality of meaning of the verse above. Therefore, the punishment imposed on the doer *zihār* must be executed before the consummation of a husband and his wife. The punishment implied is to free a slave. However, if a husband is not able to do it if he is poor, then it is compulsory for him to fast for two months in a row in a proper manner before both consummate. This is also not affordable to do, due to a permissible excuse, it is compulsory for him to feed 60 impoverished people with each one of them has had a fulfilling meal (also before both consummate). With this, if all three requirements cannot be fulfilled, then it is prohibited for the husband to consummate with his wife. At this point this study found that Shihab's exegesis has been stated by 'Āshūr (1984) in his book.

- ii. The existence of exception which specifies meaning on verses that use a general form, as in Shihab's exegesis in *sura al-Nisā'* (The Woman) verse 92 as follows:<sup>7</sup>

*"And never is it for a believer to kill a believer except by mistake. And whoever kills a believer by mistake – then the freeing of a believing slave and a compensation payment presented to the deceased's family (is required) unless they give (up their right as) charity. But if the deceased was from a people at war with you and he was a believer – then (only) the freeing of a believing slave; and if he was from a people with whom you have a treaty – then a compensation payment presented to his family and the freeing of a believing slave. And whoever does not find (one or cannot afford to buy one) – then (instead), a fast for two months consecutively, (seeking) acceptance of repentance from Allah..."*

Shihab (2010) states that the above verse was understood by some of Muslim scholars as precursor for the future verdict on ruling regarding intentional killing of a believer, hence depicting how bad such murder was. Therefore, exemption which follows the editorial of the verse was an exemption concerning such situation and condition, that is there should be no killing between one believer and another in any circumstances except for one condition namely due to a confusion or was a complete accident.

Based on that, it can be understood that there was no killing committed by one believer to another in whatever general circumstances. Nevertheless, this meaning becomes specific with the existence of the exemptions, which are confusion or a complete accident. Concerning of this, the exegesis was also raised by Sayyid (1992) in his Book. Therefore, exemptions contained in the context of the verse were exemptions which are related to every condition and circumstances.

- iii. The existence of modification which specifies the meaning of the verse using general forms, as contained in Shihab's exegesis in *sura al-Tawbah* (The Repentance) verse 29 below:<sup>8</sup>

*"Fight those who do not believe in Allah or in the Last Day and who do not consider unlawful what Allah and His Messenger have made unlawful and who do not adopt the religion of truth from those who were given the Scripture –*

<sup>5</sup> Also see the use of this rule in Shihab's exegesis in *sura al-Baqarah* 2: 180.

<sup>6</sup> *Zihār* is a speech from a mature and sane man to a woman legitimate to be married by him, that the woman is similar with one of the women that are illegitimate for him to marry, whether due to blood ties, marriage, milk siblings or other reasons (*al-Dimyāṭi*, n.d.).

<sup>7</sup> Also see the use of this rule in Shihab's exegesis in *suras al-Māidah* 5: 33 & 34 and *al-Nūr* 24: 4 & 5.

<sup>8</sup> Also see the use of this rule in Shihab's exegesis in *sura al-Isrā'* 17: 15.

(fight) until they give the jizyah willingly while they are humbled”.

Shihab (2010) states that the utterance *ahl al-Kitāb*'s (people of the book) in this verse, according to some Muslim scholars is referring to the Christians, because they had clearly associated Allah with other due to their faith in trinity. Some were on the opinion that all the *ahl al-Kitāb* includes the Jews, because they believe in the fact that there is another entity other than Allah and that they do not fully believe in the Hereafter. From these explanations it can be said that *min ahl al-kitāb* (from those who were given the Scripture) only refers to non-believers. Therefore, the command to take *jizyah*<sup>9</sup> is only directed upon them.

Based on that exegesis it can be understood that the command to fight those who do not believe in Allah and the Hereafter, those who do not forbid that which has been forbidden by Him and His Messenger, as well as those who do not embrace the true religion, namely among the people of the book are of a general nature. It can occur to anybody that falls under that category. However, this generality is specified with limitation (*ghāyah*), that is, until they pay the *jizyah* and always submissive to Islamic tenets (Al-Zuhaylī, 1998). In other words, the command to take *jizyah* is only directed to them and in the same time they will not be fought.

- iv. The existence of *ṣifāh* which specifies the meaning in the verse that uses general forms, as in Shihab's exegesis in *sura Fāṭir* (Originator) verses 32 and 33:

*“Then we caused to inherit the Book those We have chosen of Our servants; and among them is he who wrongs himself, and among them is he who is moderate, and among them is he who is foremost in good deeds by permission of Allah. That (inheritance) is what the great bounty is. (For them are) gardens of perpetual residence which they will enter...”.*

Shihab (2010) further states that three groups of servants chosen by Him and who had inherited the holy book will receive a great gift from Allah, that is the Heaven of 'Adn. There they will acquire all sorts of spiritual and physical pleasure.

On the basis of that exegesis, it can be understood that Qur'an is inherited by people chosen by Allah amongst His servants in general sense of meaning, namely the believers or non-believers all over the world (Ibn 'Aṭīyyah, 1992). Nonetheless, the meaning of *'ibādīnā* word becomes specific, referring to three groups of servant, namely those who are being unjust to themselves (*ẓālim linafsih*), living in moderation (*al-muqtaṣid*) and those who lead others when it comes to performing good deeds (*sābiq bi al-khayrāt*).<sup>10</sup> Therefore, only three groups having those attributes are specifically referred to in the above verse which eventually enters the Heaven of 'Adn.

- v. The existence of signal with *dhālika* which specifies the meaning in the verse that uses general forms, as in Shihab's exegesis in *sura al-Furqān* (The Criterion) verse 68:

*“And those who do not invoke with Allah another deity or kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed], except by right, and do not commit unlawful sexual intercourse. And whoever should do that will meet a penalty”.*

Shihab (2010) states that the *dhālika* (those) refers to combination of the three sins mentioned above, namely associating Allah, unjust killing and fornication. This is due to the fact that the above verse asserts the existence of multiplication and immortality which of course caused by the act of associating Allah with others. Indeed, whoever committed such sin will remain in torment, but those committed just one of the three will receive less punishment compared with the punishment to those committed all three.

According to that exegesis, it can be learnt that in the above verse, people who will face punishment due to their sins has a general sense of meaning, but dedicated to the three groups only, those who do not worship something else except Allah, do not commit unjust killing, except when they have the right to do so (permitted by Islamic law) and do not commit fornication. These dedications use preposition word *dhālika*. In this regard, this study found that this exegesis was also stated by 'Ashūr (1984) in his Book.

<sup>9</sup> *Jizyah* is an asset taken as a guarantee for safety and facilities given to the non-believers living in Muslim countries ('Ashūr, 2001).

<sup>10</sup> People who were unjust to themselves are those who perform obligatory practices and in the same time perform prohibited ones. People living in moderation are those who perform obligatory practices and abandon the prohibited ones, but abandoned some practices that they like (*al-mustaḥibbāt*) and committed bad things (*al-makrūhāt*). Finally, people who lead others when it comes to performing good deeds are those who perform obligatory and practices and they favoured it, abandoned those prohibited as well as permissible things (*al-mubāḥāt*) (Ibn Kathīr, 2000).



7. RULE: When a verb that requires an object but the object is not mentioned, then it is general in nature (encompasses everything definable by the word)

Among others, this rule was mentioned by al-Sa'dī (2000) which means that whenever a verb or any word that carries the meaning verb, if connected to a specific object, its meaning became confined to the object. However, if the object is not mentioned, then became general in nature, encompassing anything understandable by the word. In fact, removal of this object is better and provides many benefits, such as avoiding from slipping to narrations which do not have strong source of reference.

A clear example of the above rule is when Shihab (2010) interprets the word *iqra'* in *sura al-'Alaq* (The Clot) verse 1:<sup>11</sup>

"Recite in the name of your Lord who created".

Shihab (2010) states that due to the *iqra'* (read) word being used to carry the meaning of reading, revising, to deliver a knowledge and so on were of general meaning in nature, hence it encompassed every understandable meaning, be it written verses or otherwise. Finally, the *iqra'* command accounted for the study of the universe, community and individual as well as written text whether it is holy or not.

Shihab's exegesis on that verse explained that the *iqra'* word which means read, revise, deliver a knowledge and so on did not connect with any specific object. Therefore, the object was general in nature and covered anything understandable, whether the object that needed to be read, revised or convey knowledge was written verses or not (al-Shanqīṭī, 1995). Thus, the *iqra'* command encompassed every form of reading, such as one that was not written namely studies and exploration about the universe, community and an individual. Similarly, it accounts for reading of the meaning of the written text, such as the holy book or anything else.

## 7. Conclusion

Shihab is known as the greatest exegete in Archipelago, especially in Indonesia. He really stressed the importance of understanding the meaning of a verse based on language analysis so that the real message and meaning intended by that verse can be highlighted. Indeed, he was very well aware of such importance, hence he applied the rules of interpretation in his *magnum opus*, namely *Tafsir al-Mishbah*. In this regard, however, this study concludes that an utterance must be constantly understood in general meaning until there is a strong argument shows that the meaning of the word can be specialized, and an acceptable argument by way of narration or logic.

In addition, the rules were described here based on an analysis of the rules that have been formulated by the scholars. Thus, sometimes Shihab applies a part of the rule's content only. But it does not impair his results of interpretation, because he still follows the guidance of the existing rules. For example is on the second rule, its essence requires four things to ensure the indefinite noun contains general meaning, namely negation, prohibition, condition and interrogation. But in this case, Shihab applies only two; negation and interrogation.

Finally, this study found seven general and specific rules used by him to ensure the resulting exegesis is in accordance with the requirements of Islamic law. All seven rules employed by Shihab were indeed recognized and summarized by Muslim scholars and exegetes.

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<sup>11</sup> Also see the use of this rule in Shihab's exegesis in *suras al-Mā'idah* 5: 67, *Fuṣṣilat* 41: 41, *al-Raḥmān* 55: 2 and *al-Sharḥ* 94: 7.

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