

*Socio-Political Orientation in Qur'anic
Exegesis Methodological Approach
of Dr. Muhammad Natsir*

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Sketch of His Life

He was born in Alahan Panjang, West Sumatra, on 17 of July, 1908, in a province where prominent figures such as Muḥammad Hatta, the first vice president of Indonesia, Haji Agus Salim, a Muslim thinker, and Hamka, an influential Muslim scholar emerged.² During his childhood Natsir witnessed the Dutch discriminatory policies against the right of education. The youths were not allowed to register at state schools rather they were forced to attend private ones. By that time, Natsir, had a great ambition to get admission at state schools as they had better facilities with Dutch being medium of instruction. However, the admission was denied because the father did not have an important post in the state.

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² The village where he was born is called Jembatan Berukir. His mother was Khadijah, and father was Idris Sutan Saripado. See Yusuf Abdullah Puar (ed.), *Muhammad Natsir 70 tahun: Kenang-kenangan Kehidupan dan Perjuangan*, Pustaka Antara, Jakarta, 1978, p.1. Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia 1900-1942*, Oxford University Press, Singapore, 1973, p.88. At the beginning of twentieth century Minangkabau was known as the birthplace of Islamic reformatory thought and prominent scholars in the field of religion, intellectualism, and politic. See Yusril Ihza, *Modernisme Islam dan Demokrasi*. In: Ansar Harjono (et.al), *M. Natsir: Sumbangan dan Pemikirannya Untuk Indonesia*, Media Dakwah, Jakarta, 1995, p.118. Also see Hendro Gunawan, *M. Natsir dan Darul Islam*, Media Da'wah, Jakarta, 200, p.1

However, the Dutch allowed the citizens to run private schools to educate the indigenous youths. The first private education, *Holland Indisch School Adabiyyah*, was established in Solok, West Sumatra, with the same curriculum.¹

Natsir was admitted for one year and later he joined the state school. He was so proud for that long awaited admission. He studied for three years and lived with Haji Musa, a businessman whose son was at the same class. It seemed the person contributed considerably in shaping his religious thought through the study of the Qur'an, compulsory religious task (*farā'id al-dīniyyah*), and Arabic in his house.¹ In addition, he also sent him to *madrasah* where he got the chance to get acquaintances with reformatory religious thought of Haji Rasul and Haji Abdullah A. Padang.² Natsir admitted the kindness of the person who never differentiated with his own children. From the early age Natsir already focused on the integration of secular and religious knowledge (*'ulūm al-shar'īyyah*).

He completed elementary school in 1923 with distinction that enabled him to continue at higher level. Then, he was admitted at *Meer Uitgerbreid Lager Onderwijs: Mulo* (Junior High School) and it was the first time he sat side by side with Dutch students where he witnessed their superiority although many of them were incompetents compared with other indigenous youth.³

It was during that period he involved in activities of Muslim Youths Organization, *Jong Islamieten Bond* of West Sumatra.⁴ When he was at the final year, he faced financial constraint and later was granted the scholarship from the Dutch government. After graduation, again, it was crucial to take decision whether to pursue the higher study or seeking an employment and the parent advised him not to bother about the job. Then, in 1927 he went to Bandung where he was admitted at *Algemene Middlebare School: AMS* (Senior High School)⁵ where he studied

¹ Ibid., p.5

² Deliar Noer, op.cit., p.88

³ Yusuf A. Puar (ed.), op.cit.

⁴ Padang *Jong Islamieten Bond* (JIB) was under the leadership of Sanusi Pane, a famous literary man of Indonesia who, by that time, sat at third year. (Ibid.: 7).

⁵ Ibid., p.11

Western classical literature and Greek civilization. He was impressed by the thought of the principal who taught him about the politic and encouraged the students to think about the independence.¹

Natsir felt satisfied although at the beginning he faced language barrier. However, he was able to overcome his problem which caused him to praise the educational method with the use of analytical thinking. One day a lecturer asked students to write an assignment with regard to the advantages of sugar farm and factories to the people of Java. He wrote an essay criticizing the exploitation of Dutch government with the use of scientific data from the library.² Natsir's intellectual vision grew in Bandung where he got the chance to meet A. Hassan, a Muslim reformist with *wahabis* influence.³ Natsir was fascinated by his vast religious knowledge and simplicity of his life.⁴ He completed his education in 1930 and got a sponsorship to pursue his study at Dutch university. In fact his parents expected him to be a lawyer to earn the reputation of the family but the son decided not to take that chance rather he opted to study about the education.⁵ Natsir was worried about disappointing parents and because of that he wrote

¹ George Mc T. Kahin, *Mohammad Natsir (1908-1993 Sebuah Kenangan*. In: Anwar Harjono (et.al), *M. Natsir Sumbangan dan Pemikrannya untuk Indonesia*, Media Dakwah, Jakarta, 1995, p.51. Also see Soebadio Sastrosatomo, *Percikan Pemikiran Dr. M. Natsir Dalam Pergumulan Intellectual Indonesia*. In: Anwar Harjono (et.al), p.105.

² Yusauf A. Puar (ed.), op.cit., p.14

³ Ahmad Hassan was born in Singapore in 19887 with mixed parent of Indian and Indonesian. The father, Ahmad, famous as Sinna Vapur Maricar was reputed Muslim scholar trained him with religious knowledge at home to study Arabic language which he regarded it as a key to comprehensive understanding about Islam. In 1921 Hassan moved to Surabaya to join his uncle, Haji Abdul Latif, in textile business. During the stay he frequently visited Bandung that was initially attempted to study weaving techniques at the government textile institute. He met Haji Muhammad Junus, a founding member of Persis, and sat with him to hear his lectures and impressed with the vision of religion that he ever learnt in Singapore. See Deliar Noer, op.cit., pp.86-87.

⁴ Fakhruddin al-Khahiri was the one who introduced him with A. Hassan. He encouraged Natsir to deepen the religion and gave him a copy of the English commentary of the Qur'an of Yusuf Ali. Natsir was impressed due to his courage in the debate against innovation that contradicted with the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. Abdullah Puar (ed.), op.cit., p.17

⁵ After graduation from the *Allegemene Middlebare School: AMS* Natsir entitled the sponsorship to pursue higher study at Faculty of law in Jakarta or the study at the school of economy at Rotterdam in Holland. See George Mc Turnan Kahin, op.cit., p.53. It is noted that instead of taking the offer to study at university he chose to study the education until he got the diploma in 1931. See Deliar Noer, op.cit., p.88.

a letter that was responded positively showing the appreciation for the noble purpose to serve the religion through education.¹ During that period, he also joined the Muslim Youth (*Jong Islamiten Bond*) and was given the task of giving religious guidance to the youths. Later he was elected as chairman from 1928-1932.² In addition through the youth organization, Natsir got guidance from senior colleagues especially Haji Agus Salim, HOS Tjokroaminoto, and Sangaji. (Soebadio Sastrosatomo, 1995: 105).

Intellectualism and *Da'wah*

Natsir exerted his efforts to deepen the knowledge of religion under the guidance of A. Hassan who liked his writing and speaking skill. Hassan appointed him as a member of editorial board of *Pembela Islam* magazine (lit. defender of Islam).³ There must be the reason behind his decision not to pursue the study at university level with availability of scholarship. Apparently the decision was taken due to ripeness of religious thought and emergence of the spirit to make social reform through religious services to determine the prosperity of the nation.

Natsir started writing in *Pembela Islam* to respond to alien ideas that negated comprehensiveness of the *SharĒ'ah*. He was aware that the existence of such impression was due to the influence of Western thought that eulogized material progress. He thought that the problem could only be solved through integrative education. He viewed that religious education offered in the traditional Islamic schools, *pesantren*, did not give sufficient attention on worldly sciences. As a result, he held, the graduated students were lack of skills to respond the reality of life.⁴ This vision indicates the keenness of Natsir on the

¹ Yusuf A. Puar (ed.), op.cit., pp.18-19

² The founding members of *Jong Islamieten Bond* : *JIB* were Haji Agus Salim, Wiwoho Purbohadidjoyo, and Syamsurijal with the aim of training the youths about Islam. Through series of activities he built friendship with Kasman Singadimejo, Mohammad Roem, and Prawoto Mangkusasmito who, all them, occupied leadership post within the *Masjumi* under his leadership. (*Ibid.* :).

³ It is noted that Natsir during the day was working with A. Hassan in editorial board of a magazine, while at night he studied the books on Islam in English and Arabic (*Ibid.*: 21)

⁴ *Ibid.*

integration of spirituality and intellectualism that complies with today's views of Islamization of knowledge.

He decided to run private school although he realized on pedagogic knowledge. The decision was taken after having consultation with A. Hassan and Fakhruddin al-Khahiri (Yusuf A. Puar 1995: 29). Thus, before he started the new project he read books pertaining to the teaching method and this, again, indicated his awareness that quality of education could not be achieved haphazardly rather it needed a proper plan and psychological approach. He was obsessed with comprehensive methodology that could produce students who are well equipped with religious and worldly knowledge. To attain this objective, in 1931, Natsir registered at teacher training institute.¹

After graduation he initiated the application of the method through private courses on Islam and other subjects. Later, Natsir started formal *pendidikan Islam: pendis* (Islamic education) for kindergarten, *Holland Indische School: HIS* (elementary school), and *Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs: Mulo* (junior high school). In 1932, he also established teacher-training institute,² in addition to *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) with the aim of training the students to serve as preachers in the community.

The established educational institute offered the same curriculum at the Dutch school and added compulsory study of religious subjects. He combined the method of teaching of the analytical and doctrinal to avoid the blind imitation.³ However, the above educational program ended up to 1942 with arrival of Japanese occupation which banned all private schools.

¹ Natsir graduated from the teacher training institute in the midst of 1932 and gained certificate of *Lager Onderwijs: LO*. (Ibid., p.31)

² In 1938 Natsir opened its branches in five cities of West Java. The students mostly came from the surrounding areas and some them from Sumatra and other parts of central Java. After graduation they opened new branches in their own district or joined the schools which already established by Muslim leaders of reformatory thought. See Deliar Noer, op.cit., p.89 and George Mc Turnan Kahin, op.cit., p.53.

³ Ibid.

Islam and the Thought of Government

Natsir's religious thought related with the state was crystallized in response to the views of Soekarno. He viewed that the backwardness of Muslim world was due to the heavy emphasis on the *SharĒ'ah* that was sent to the Bedouin society and could not catch up with the progress of science and technology. Soekarno also believed that to achieve material progress the divine message should be separated from the state affairs as its doctrine, according to him, merely deals with individuals. He admired the Western civilization and requested to re-interpret Islam and to adopt the secular thought of Kemal Ataturk.¹

Natsir wrote about Islam as foundation of the state. Although Soekarno was the first person who attacked some aspects of Islam, it is irrefutable fact that he also played the role in launching an idea which at the end, caused responses from other scholars.² If there was no such controversial issue, perhaps, the Islamic thought did not reach such progress. This is the positive aspect of pluralism although in many cases it becomes a tedious job for committed Muslim scholars to respond to it. Even the thought of Natsir was crystallized after he became involved in series of debate about Islam and secularism.

On the first part, Natsir describes the role of Islam in the state, in which he says,

The only thing, people always forget when talk about the matter of religion and the government they give the meaning of Islam is simply what they called it as daily ritual services such as praying and fasting. What is called religion according to Islamic understanding covers all principles and boundaries (*hudud*) in social interaction based on regulation as Islam defined it.³

¹ *Aliran Islam*, No.20, 1951, pp.14-15, and Yusuf Abdullah Puar (ed.), op.cit., pp.46-47

² The response came from A. Hassan who wrote in *al-Lisan Magazine* under the title '*Membudakkan Islam*'. While Tengku Muhammad Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy wrote in *Lasykar Islam*. Similarly, H. Sirajuddin Abbas who strongly opposed Soekarno's idea. (*Ibid.*)

³ *Ibid.*, p.14.

According to him all principles related with state affairs are mentioned briefly in the revelation. He is of the view that the laws of Allah consist of two main aspects. The first pertains to the right and obligation of individual toward God (*mu'Émalah ma' al-khalq*) and the second pertains to human inter-relation with others (*muamalah ma'a al-khalq*). Natsir views that relation of individuals in the government is included within the second part.¹ This is, perhaps, the other aspect of distinctive thought in which many Muslim scholars when discussing the laws pertaining to the social aspect rarely relate it with teamwork in the government.

However, we found inconsistency in the view of Natsir especially when he responded to those who criticized the inadequacy of the divine message to catch up with modernity. Although in major aspects his thoughts fully support the *SharÉ'ah* in matter of running the state he regards the Qur'an does not regulate the future plan and currency.² In fact, this kind of system is covered in the Qur'an although it is mentioned quite briefly. The use of *dinnÉr* in the days of the Prophet (pbuh) and the concept of usurious transaction (*ribÉ'*) can be regarded as a system of currency. In addition, the Qur'an also requires individuals running the government to make the proper plan based on *taqwÉ* to achieve the highest result. It seems this aspect is missing in the writing of Natsir.

Natsir was not so much keen about the advancement of science and technology as both of them, according to him, are changeable based on civilizational progress of the nation. This is what he said,

It will not be found in the Qur'an the way how to regulate the traffic system and the way how to put the antenna of television. Everything that is related with worldly matters that are changeable based on space and time do not need to be regulated with the divine law. The thing which needs to be regulated with divine laws is related with human beings who are unchangeable in term of needs and characters whether they lived in Bedouin and technological scientific era.³

¹ Ibid., See also Muhammad Natsir, *Islam Sebagai Dasar Negara*, Dewan Da'wah Islamiyyah Indonesia and Universitas Islam Muhammad Natsir, Jakarta, 200, p.4.

² *Aliran Islam*, 19 December, 1950, p.13.

³ Ibid.

Many Muslim scholars these days are obsessed with technology and scientific findings comply with the divine values. Even in the past Muslim scientists in the fields of astronomy and mathematics after learning Greek theory of knowledge revised it after they found its principles in the divine revelation. Al-Khawarizme for instance, came up with mathematical theory of algebra and Ibn Sina with the theory of medicine under the concept *al-qanĒn fĒ al-Īib* (lit. canon of medicine). In the field of astronomy al-Biturji came up with the ideal invention of compass to identify the direction of *qiblah*, ascertain the time of prayers and determine the beginning of the month. Even in the field of architecture, Muslim engineers are required to conceptualize the Islamic construction design to comply with the divine value systems.

However, the above view contradicts the following statement that Natsir made during a constitutional debate.

In the field of science, Mr. Chairman, secularism makes all sciences disintegrated from norms of life and civilization. Ethic is separated from the science. In the field of economy it is disintegrated from the ethic. Social sciences are separated from moral norms, culture, and belief. The same case is related with the aspect psychology, philosophy, and law. For the sake of objectivity the separation of ethic from the science it may be useful. However, there must be the boundary where we cannot disintegrate science from ethical norms. The advancement of technology could produce the atomic bomb. However, those experts who involve in creating such bomb are responsible in term of its application. For those who separate ethic from science is so easy to escape from responsibility. From this, we can see the influence of secularism where the knowledge and science have been made its own objective simply science for the sake of science.¹

The above statement shows his keenness to integrate religious ethics with all branches of knowledge. It is a matter of consistency which sometimes Natsir expressed on different occasion.

¹ Muhammad Natsir, op.cit., p.64.

Comprehensiveness of *'ibādah*

Like other Muslim scholars, Natsir refers to the verse of the Qur'an which becomes the main catalyst of worship and devotion. In giving exposition toward text of the Qur'an, he always relates with socio-political condition. He is of the view that Allah did not give religious precept simply for the spiritual nourishment. The relation between the two must be balance to achieve the progress in this world and in the hereafter. During the political debate with secular group for instance, he offered the solution to give remedy of malaise from religious guidance. This is his view on *'ibādah* as mentioned in this verse which says,

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

I have only created Jinns and men, that they may serve Me.¹

According to him, the above Qur'anic message should be used as the main principle how a Muslim becomes full slave of Allah to achieve successful lives. Living in this world and the hereafter, he says, is inseparable from religious belief. In this context, he regards the Islam as an ideological system which motivates human activities. Here, he conceptualizes the relation of *'ibādah* and religion in which the word *dīn* (religion) is seen as way of life and the whole practice of that religion is phrased in the realm of worship (*'ibādah*). In order to achieve the perfection, Allah gives two principles which, on the first part, are related with *ḥabl min al-ILāh* to link human beings with Allah. The second is known as *ḥabl min al-nās* to link the relation with fellow human beings. In this particular context, Natsir simply argues that a Muslim must have an ambition to be full slave of Allah. The worldly lives and hereafter are two inseparable entities.²

The concept *'ibādah* (lit. enslavement), should not be confined into ritual services such as prayer, fasting, and performing the pilgrimage. It must go beyond realm of the boundary. Moreover,

¹ Qur'an, 51:56.

² See Natsir, Muhammad, *Islam Sebagai Dasar Negara*, Dewan Dakwah Islamiyyah, Jakarta, 1421H/2000M, pp.3-4.

he views that all regulation starting from individual, collectivity, and up to the governmental order, the divine message laid down its principles as contained in the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. However, these two sources will not be automatically effective without the presence of authority to supervise the practice in the community. It is equal with other constitution in which whatever the fascination of its clauses, the rules and regulation cannot operate by itself. There must be an authority that supervises the practice. Here, Natsir is of the view that the total practice of the *'ibādah* in the collective level needs establishment of an institution which is mainly in charge of guarding the implementation of the divine guidance.

The relation of *'ibādah* (lit. devotion) with governmental order is imperative. It does not mean that the establishment of an authority should become the first priority without individual religious consciousness and commitment. The emergence of an authority is inseparable from building up the personality which is considered as nucleuse of the overall practice of the *Shari'ah*.¹ He fully believes that the establishment of an Islamic order cannot be achieved simply by focusing on the political aspect without the support from the masses who are overwhelmed with religious consciousness.

Muslim Family Live

Here we come with his exegesis which is related with the formation of Muslim family. First, we have to look on the textual evident in the Qur'an and then we analyze his methodology of giving interpretation of the verse which says,

وَكَيْفَ تَأْخُذُونَهُ وَقَدْ أَفْضَى بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ وَأَخَذْنَ مِنْكُمْ مِيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا

And how could ye take it when ye have gone in when ye have gone in unto each other, and they have taken from you solemn Covenant?²

¹ Natsir, M., *Fiqhud Da'wah*, Pustaka Nasional, Singapura, n.d, p.74.

² Qur'an, 4:21.

Natsir, firstly gives elaborative meaning of the words contained in that text. The words *kayfa ta'khudhūnahū* it means how you heartedly posses courageous sense (*sampai hati*) to reclaim the things that you have granted to her while both of you used to live together and wives have made solemn covenant from you? Then, he elaborates further from etymological aspect in which, according to him, the word *galīdh* (lit. solemn) is mentioned in three places in which two of them are related with the covenant given by Allah to all prophets. In view of this, the *'aqd al-nikāh* is considered as most valuable reciprocal contract between husbands and wives.¹ Hence, the relation of the two cannot be easily annulled without any reason.

As other scholar in the field of exegesis, Natsir also follows the method of elaborating the Qur'ān with another verse in pursuit of the clarification. In term of the relation between the spouse (husband and wife), it is seen as complimentary to achieve the balance based on mutual understanding and responsibility. It is inevitable that a husband shoulders the bigger task as head of the family. This is his exegesis on the verse,

وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable; but men have degree (of advantage) over them. And Allah is exalted in power wise.²

Again, Natsir gives exegesis in which, he holds, that those wives have the right over you and those husbands also have the right over themselves. Here the word *bi al-ma'rūf* as contained in that verse is given the meaning on the basis of fairness and justice. The word *al-rijāl* refers to husbands who occupy higher status in terms of responsibility toward the family. Then, he elaborates further that the meaning of *darajah* as covered in that verse indicates that whatever a husband has higher status, it should not be understood that a person misuses the authority to suppress against wives. It describes the task

¹ Op.cit., p.75.

² Qur'an, 2: 288.

and responsibility in running the family affairs on the basis of divine guidance.

He elaborates the significance of family as smallest unit in the community to prepare Muslim generation who, in the long run, devote their lives for the purpose of establishing religious order based on the divine guidance. Then, it comes with his interpretation of the verse which specifically relates with responsibility of a husband in the family. Here is the exegesis of the verse,

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ

Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means.¹

In that verse he gives the meaning of *al-rijāl* with husbands who are known as protector and defenders (*qawwāmmūna*) toward *al-nisā* (lit. wives) due to the favors that Allah has given them more than others (women) and based on what they spent for them from their wealth. Here we see that Natsir follows other *mufassir* in giving elaboration toward the verse of the Qur'an with the use of *ḥadīth* of the Prophet (pbuh) which says,

وَالرَّجُلُ رَاعٍ فِي أَهْلِهِ وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ وَالْمَرْأَةُ رَاعِيَةٌ فِي بَيْتِ زَوْجِهَا وَمَسْئُولَةٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهَا

According to him, a male person is regarded as a head of members of the family who is accountable over his leadership. Likewise a wife is also considered as a leader related with family matters of her husband and, again, she also will be asked responsibility over her leadership.² Later, the parent (husband and wife) are reminded with regard to the custodianship and education of children who are born on the basis of nature (*fiṭrah*). It is, again, the parent is reminded with their task to educate them which will determine their future destiny in this world and in the hereafter. Again, he quotes the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet (pbuh) which says,

¹ Qur'an, 4:34.

² See *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Vol.3, p.414, *ḥadīth* no.844

كُلُّ مَوْلُودٍ يُوَلَّدُ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ فَابْوَاهُ يَهُودَانِهِ أَوْ نَصْرَانِهِ أَوْ مَجْسَانِهِ

Each child is born in state of purity (fitrah) and the parents who make him become a Jew, Christian, or Majūsī.¹

After the parent are reminded about the responsibility to take care toward the children both in physical as well mental health, then, the textual evident invites the children to be aware on their efforts who took care and protected them with hardship and difficulties faced by their mothers starting with the times of pregnancy and delivery, then, they are reminded to treat them kindly as manifestation of gratefulness to Allah Who created them as well as to their parents especially a mother. We will see his exegesis on the verse which says,

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهْنًا عَلَى وَهْنٍ وَفِصَالُهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ

And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in years twain was his weaning: (hear The command), Show gratitude to Me and to thy parents: to Me is (thy final) Goal.²

Then, he clarifies that offering good treatment which is to be performed by a person toward their parents are repeatedly advised as duty which directly links with an obligatory task of individual in actualizing the concept of *tawhīd* to dedicate their lives and devotion for the cause of Allah. In giving more elaboration, here, he refers toward other verses such as

لَا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا

Worship none but Allah; treat with kindness your parents.³

¹ See *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Vol.5, p.182.

² Qur'an, 31:14

³ Qur'an, 2:83.

وَأَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا

Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him; and do good to parents.¹

Men and Community

Natsir considers that the message of the Qur'Ēn needs to be implemented in the community in the collective efforts to attain the goodness. We will analyze his approach on these following verses which could be considered as the main elements to enhance solidarity in human lives. In addition, the Qur'Ēn also gives warning on certain elements which could spoil the collective activities as we will see in the following verses,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصِبْحُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ

In that particular verse, Natsir elaborates that whenever a *fāsiq* person brings the news, we should not take it straightway rather on the first place, we have to investigate how far it is true. The word *antuṣībū qawman bi jahālatin* he gives the meaning in order not to make any judgment to certain group (*qawman*) in which you do not really know the real position which, at the end, caused you in disappointment due to what that you have done it (*‘alā mā fa‘altum nādimīn*). He is of the view that the above divine warning should be observed especially in Muslim community to maintain the unity and solidarity. Muslims are reminded especially whenever hear the news which contains the element of *fitnah* which will cause disruption in the community.²

Another aspect which could lead into the destruction congregational life, then, the Qur'ān requires making reconciliation whenever they are under the threat of conflict as the verse says,

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

¹ Qur'an, 4:36.

² See Natsir, Mohammad, op.,cit., p.83.

Verily all believers are brothers one to each other. In view of this make reconciliation among your two (contending) brothers and fear God in order to get the blessing and Mercy.¹

Respect, understanding, and appreciation are regarded an important factor to maintain the unity and peacefulness in the community. The Qur'an reminds all individuals not look down and even to suspect against others without valid reason which could be regarded as the main deceases which could threatens the unity as the evident says,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرُ قَوْمٌ مِّن قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِّن نِّسَاءٍ
عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ

O those who believe! *La yaskhar qawmun min qawmin* (Let not a group of people downgrade another group by laughing at them in cynical way as it may happen that those whom they humiliate could be better than those who look down upon them. In order to maintain harmonious relation with all individual members of the community, the Qur'an gives certain direction in which no one is allowed to call others with the use of bad name as the verse says,

وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ بِئْسَ الْأَسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ
بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

Do not look down upon yourselves (*wala talmizū anfusakum*) and *walā tanabazū bi al-alcāb* (do not call upon others with the use of word that contains of humiliation) and *waman lam yatub* (and those who do not return (stop from doing such sinful act) *fa ulāika hum al-zālimūn* (they are known as people who commit sin).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَلَا تَحَسَسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَبِ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا
أَيُّحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ

¹ Ibid., p.84.

O those who believe! *Ijtanibū kathīran min al-ẓan* (keep yourself away from most suspicion) as in certain case suspicion is regarded as sinful act. While the word *walā tajasasū* he gives the commentary as none should reveal negative characters of others. The words *walā yagtab ba'dukum ba'dan* is translated as do not talk ill against others in his absent and *ayubibbu ahadukum an ya'kula laḥma akhīhi maytan* (Is there any of you who fond of eating the dead flesh his brothers) *fakarihtumūh* (Indeed you hesitate to do it). Then, he gives commentary on *wattaqullāh inna al-LLāh ghafūrrun al-raḥīm* (as be fear of Allah by fulfilling the obligatory task and verily He is the recipient of repentance and Merciful).

Islam and Nationalism

The Prophet (pbuh) and his companions demonstrated the use *shūrā* (lit. consultation) which represents the corner stone to maintain the state construction when the whole world followed despotism and oligarchy in running the government. Natsir views that people's love toward their homeland is in fact a part of human nature (*fiṭrah*) which cannot be eradicated. We will see the rules of the Qur'an with regard to that particular concept and his exposition toward it. This is the verse of the Qur'an which he regards it as the main reference of loving toward the homeland,

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ
عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

Oh mankind! We created you, from male and female. The word *shu'ūban wa qabāila* means that Allah created mankind into different nations and tribes with the sole purpose of knowing each other. Here the word *lita'arafū* is not limited in knowing their characters and nature. Moreover, Allah wants those human beings who follow different religious belief is to cooperate, respect, give and take through mutual assistance positively. Even, he regards that it is divine wisdom to create them into diversity of races, nations, and tribe with the sole purpose of acquainting and respecting each others. The diversity of tribes and nations also to give them the chance to compete in achieving progress which, at the end, to be devoted for human

welfare. In fact, the diversity of creation is aimed at cooperating among different nations. However, the love of the nation should not go beyond the limit which causes into fanaticism and to consider that certain nation is superior than others. The love toward nation and tribes should be geared toward serving the Creator. The verse concludes that there is hardly any xenophobia as the most honored people in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you (*inna akramakum 'inda al-ILāhi atqākum*).¹ He gives exegesis on that concluding verse that the noblest among you are those who devote their lives for the cause of their Lord.

Then, he gives more elaboration through the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet (pbuh) on equality of mankind in terms of the right and obligation. This is the *ḥadīth* that he quotes,

فَلَيْسَ لِعَرَبِيٍّ عَلَى عَجَمِيٍّ فَضْلٌ، وَلَا لِعَجَمِيٍّ عَلَى عَرَبِيٍّ فَضْلٌ، وَلَا لَأَسْوَدَ عَلَى أَيْبُضٍ وَلَا لَأَبْيَضَ عَلَى
أَسْوَدَ فَضْلٌ إِلَّا بِالتَّقْوَى،

Leadership Principles

First, we have to see his approach toward the verses which are related with leadership. Natsir refers to certain verses of the Qur'an which are related with governmental order and, then, he came out with his own interpretation. He is of the view that the total practice of divine message should not be left out without interference of the authority. Here, he regards that an Islamic authority must be established with the main task of supervising the total practice of the religion. This is methodological approach on the verse related with governance,

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ

First, we look at the way he approaches toward the core of the meaning and understanding of the text. In that particular context Natsir elaborates the significance of leadership to be offered for those

¹ See Natsir, Muhammad, *Agama dan Negara Dalam Perspektif Islam*, Media Dakwah, 1422H/2001M, pp.32-33.

who fully believe in Allah and His Messenger to safeguard the divine message as well as to ensure the practice in the community which gives the guarantee of justice and peacefulness. He focuses on the meaning of *innama waliyukumullāhu wa rasuluhu* in which, he holds, indeed there is no one deserves to your leader (*waliyukum*) except Allah and His Messenger and those who believe, establishing the prayer (*yuqīmūna al-ṣalāh*), and paying *zakah*. The word *wahum rāki'ūn* in this particular context, he does not give exegesis like other *mufasssir* who mostly regard it as offer bowing down and prostrating. But, he refers it to those who prostrate to observe Allah's rules and commands.¹

In giving more elaboration on that verse, again, he relates with the imperatives of establishing an order which is to be entrusted to those who have God consciousness, skillful, and professional. In view of this, he said, Islam never tolerates the government to be run by those who rely on superstitious belief and have moral bankruptcies. Moreover, Islam requires every all Muslims to be very selective not to choose a person who play with the religion. Once they are successful in establishing an authority, then, in elaboration on the relation of the religion with the state, he focuses on the duty of individual to criticize against coercive and despotic ruler to misuse their power. Here, again, Natsir gives elaboration of that particular verse with the use of *ḥadīth* of the Prophet (pbuh) which says,

أَنَّ رَجُلًا سَأَلَ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَقَدْ وَضَعَ رِجْلَهُ فِي الْعُرْزِ أَيُّ الْجِهَادِ أَفْضَلُ قَالَ كَلِمَةٌ حَقٌّ
عِنْدَ سُلْطَانٍ جَائِرٍ

He deals with the *ḥadīth* in which the translation says, A person used to ask the Prophet (pbuh), 'What are the most virtuous deeds of *jihād*?', he said. 'Saying the truth in front of tyrannical leader', the Prophet replied.² Again, Natsir regards that the ruler cannot be left out without giving correction whenever he adopts the wrong policy. In Islam, democratic system is to give criticism, reminder, and to make correction against unjust ruler. Whenever it is insufficient or

¹ See Natsir's commentary of the Qur'an, 5: 55.

² See Sunan al-Nasai, Vol.13, p.121, hadith no.4138.

ineffective with such correction, then, Islam gives the right to the people to wipe off the injustices even with the use of force.¹

Ensuring the divine message as source of legislation to run the governmental order, we will see his exegesis related with peaceful co-existence among other religious adherents as the verse says,

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيِّمًا عَلَيْهِ
فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ عَمَّا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ لِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا
وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِيمَا آتَاكُمْ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ
إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ

He first deals with the meaning of the words contained in that verse. We have sent down the Book to you (Muhammad) confirming the truth of the previous Scriptures. The word *wa muhaiman 'alayhi* is given the meaning as to preserve what is contained in that book. In view of this you should judge them with the law that Allah sent it down. The word *walā tatabi' ahwāahum*, he translates do not tolerate human desire to deviate from the truth. The word *likullin ja'alnā minkum shir'atan wa minhājan* he gives translation, to all of you Allah granted guidance. *Walau shā'a al-ILāh lajalakum ummatan wāhidah*, If it is wished, He should have made you a united community (*ummatan wāhidah*), but He wants to give you the test concerning to what happened to you. In view of this, compete in performing the virtues. To Allah all of you will be returned and He will give the proof on what you have disputed.

Then, he gives an interpretation in which, according to him, the message of Islam is to ensure that the religion should become the main element in the government and people are governed with the divine guidance. In addition, law and regulation should be based on its teaching.

With regard to the worldly affairs, Islamic religion gives the room and flexibility in running the government to suit with the

¹ See Natsir, Muhammad, *Islam Sebagai Dasar Negara*, Dewan Dakwah Islamiyyah Indonesia, Jakarta, 1421H/2000M, pp.7-8.

environment. This is especially related with the matter when the Qur'an and Sunnah do not give the direction in detail. Even in deciding the matter, the Qur'an encourages the use of the mechanism to conduct consultation with the condition that the outcome does not contradict with the spirit of the textual guidance.

Here is the text that Natsir quotes related with *shūra*,

وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَهُمْ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

On the first part, he gives the meaning that *wa al-lazina istajabu li rabbihim* (those who respond to their Lord by observing His rules and regulation) and establish the prayer. While the word *wa amruhum shūrā baynahum* (he gives translation as, it is advisable that they decide their affairs through consultation to reach into the good decision).

With regard to the leadership principles, first, we have to distinguish it from dealing with people who follow other religions. Islam highly encourages to treat all human beings equally without any discrimination as long as those followers of other religions do not pose physical threat against Muslims. The divine guidance says,

لَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوهُمْ
وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ

Allah does not stop you to those who do not wage war against you in matter of religion (*fi al-dīn*) and do not expel you from your own country (*min diyārikum*), to offer kindness and justice toward them.¹ His exposition says that Islam allows Muslim to make commercial transaction with those who follow other religion. Even it allows marrying the female who belong the people of the Book (Jews and Christians). In the history of Muslim rulers, Churches and Synagogues remained undisturbed and they were allowed to practice their own religions without hardship.

¹ Ibid., p.55.

However, the issue of leadership is the one which will determine the future of the country on the basis of Islamic principles. The non-Muslims should not be made as their leader as it related with the policy based on the religious guidance. The followings are the guidance selecting leader as the Qur'an,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ أَوْلِيَاءَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ
وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ

Natsir regards the above verse is related with leadership system in which Muslims are strongly banned to make Jews and Christians as their leaders. The word *awliyā* is given the meaning as a leader. They are the leaders of their own people. Whoever any of you (Muslims) make them as their leaders (*waman yatallahum minkum*), then, he is belonging to them. Allah will never give the guidance to those who are doing injustice.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَكُمْ هُزُوءًا وَلَعِبًا مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ
مِن قَبْلِكُمْ وَالْكَفَّارَ أَوْلِيَاءَ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ كُنتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

O those who believe! Do not ever make a leader from those who make your religion as mockery and playing (*huzuwan wa la'iban*) from the People of the Book before you and do not make unbelievers as a leader (*awliya*), and fear Allah if you are truly a believer.

Apart from rejecting those people whom Muslims should not make them as their leaders, then, Natsir uses another verse which can be adopted as a guide for a Muslim in selecting the right person as leader by quoting this verse,

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ

His translation says, there is no one which deserves to be your leader except Allah and His Messenger, all leaders who believe and establish the prayer and pay obligation of charity (*zakah*), and they bow themselves down in observing Allah's command.¹

¹ See Natsir, Muhammad, op.cit., p.57.

Only to such qualified leaders who demonstrate their faith with worship and devotion which distinguishes them from unbelievers (*kufir*), believe in Allah and His Messenger and all behaviors are governed with the divine message, then, Muslims are lawful in offering the loyalty in their efforts and struggle to achieve the goal.

Again, through their efforts and sacrifices, Muslims will gain the victory in establishing the truth as the next textual evident says,

وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَإِنَّ حِزْبَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْعَالِينَ

Then, Natsir gives an interpretation that only those who make Allah and His Messenger, and those who believe as their leaders, then, *hizb al-ILāh* (soldiers of Allah) who will achieve the victory.

