

## INTERPRETATION OF HEAVEN IN THE TAFSIR AL-AZHAR BY HAMKA AND ITS RELEVANCE TO EDUCATIONAL VALUES

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### **Abstract**

Many researchers have conducted studies on Hamka. However, studies on the rationalization of the interpretation of verses about Heaven and tracing the causes of the rationalization of performance have yet to be carried out. Therefore, the researcher was interested in conducting this study further. The type of this research is library research with a descriptive-analytical method. The genealogical theory of Michel Foucault explains the genealogy of Hamka's interpretation of thought. The conclusion of this article explains that, Firstly, Hamka attempts to make a rational and contextual interpretation of the verses describing Heaven. With the method of sensible and contextual performance, the metaphysical and abstract nature of Heaven becomes easily understood by readers (society), moreover explained by Hamka in simple language and explanation. Secondly, Hamka's rationalist thinking and contextual typology of description were influenced by several factors, including his life experience as a preacher, writer, organization, and his teachers. Thirdly, Hamka's interpretation of the verses about Heaven accommodates educational values between humans and God and also among humans.

**Keywords:** interpretation of heaven; genealogy of thought; Hamka; Al-Azhar

## INTRODUCTION

Diversity in the interpretation of the Qur'an is a necessity and naturally occurs. This diversity occurs among others because it is influenced by developments and changing times, human knowledge, domicile, and the generation of mufassir (Ismail, 2017). The diversity of interpretations is not to be debated because differences or variations in the performance of the Qur'an usually occur within the scope of varied, not contradictory distinctions (Parwanto, 2018). The diversity and differences in narrative interpretations of the al-Qur`an have happened since the time of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. Therefore, the diversity of interpretations is not a problem if the variations are within the scope of reasonableness and are relevant to the general principles agreed upon by Muslim scholars (Parwanto & Engku Alwi, 2023).

Likewise, in the development of interpretation in the Archipelago, differences in performance also generally occur, both in the systematics, methodology, and narratives. Factors that stimulate the emergence of differences in performance also vary, both in terms of the scientific background of the mufassir, the locus or place where the version (tafsir product) is written, the community as the target of the performance, as well as the scholarly tendencies and religious organizations of the interpreters (Gusmian et al., 2023).

Heaven is a vital concept of Islam. Several researchers have carried out studies of heaven in the Qur'an. Mervat Albufalasa, examining the terms heaven and hell in Juz *Amma*, the conclusion of this study is that 54 terms represent the mention of heaven and hell, 35 terms (65%) about suffering, and 19 terms (35%) about heaven (Firdaus). The mention of heaven and hell motivates people to increase their righteous deeds (to heaven) and suggests fear of hell (Merval Albufalasa, 2021).

Ahmad Minnanurrohman wrote about heaven from the perspective of *Al-Misbah's interpretation*; his article concludes that heaven is an eternal life and to enter it not only uses good deeds but also has a share of God's love, including the blessings in heaven that God gives to humans, such as fruits: fruits, clothes and the pleasure of seeing Allah (Minanurrohman, 2021). Riswan Sulaeman, studying heaven from the perspective of Abdul Qadir Jailani's interpretation, the conclusion of his study that the pleasures of heaven according to Abdul Qadir Jailani are immaterial (*ruhiyyah*), and the highest satisfaction is *ma'rifatullah* (Riswan Sulaeman, 2017).

In addition to studying the character's thoughts, the theme of heaven is also conceptually explored. Samsul and Hilal, for example, check the *Proverbs in the Verses of Heaven and Hell*, and their study concludes that the Qur'an gives a picture of heaven and hell with physical and spiritual

pleasures and torments. With the aim that humans hope and fear Allah's punishment (Samsul Bahri dan Hilal Refiana, 2017). Saidin Manysur also carried out a conceptual study of heaven with the title *Concept of the Qur'an about Heaven; his analysis concludes that the Qur'an not only describes heaven but also explains its pleasures and the way or way to get it* (Mansyur, 2018).

Hamka is one of the biggest mufassir in the archipelago. Hamka was born in Minangkabau, an area known for its rich variety of traditions, culture, and natural wealth (Murodi, 2007); Hamka is also a novelist and writer (Parwanto, 2022), so the illustration of locality and individual background influence his narration.

Al-Azhar is one of Hamka's most significant works. It is a book of Quran interpretation. Studying the work from individual, local, and intellectual backgrounds is essential. Then, it is necessary to present relevant research to see the differences and significance between his career and other mufassir.

This study focuses on several issues as follows: 1) Hamka's interpretation of heaven in the Al-Azhar Book of the Quran Interpretation; 2) Tracing the genealogy of Hamka's thoughts in interpreting the Qur'an; and 3) Correlating Hamka's interpretation of heaven with educational values.

This study is quite different from previous studies. Thus, the research is significant to do.

## **METHOD**

This study is library research with a descriptive-analytic method (Ramdhan, 2021). According to Foucault, knowledge does not appear naturally, but some things influence the emergence of that knowledge, and this is what Foucault calls his archaeological concept (Michel Foucault. Michael and Foucault claim that the birth of knowledge is motivated by many factors, such as domicile, teacher, organization, interests, and several other entities that can affect the delivery of one's thoughts (Parwanto & Riyani, 2022). So, with this, the researcher will see or reveal the factors that influence Hamka's thinking in his interpretation.

## **Overview of the Historical-Biographical of Hamka**

Hamka was born in Sungai Batang, West Sumatra, on February 17th 1908, and died in 1981 (Mukti et al., 2022; Rahmatulloh, 2022; Zahra et al., 2022). Hamka had a career in the pre-independence period until the end of his life (Bahri, 2018). His intellectual life and thought were influenced by the central figure of the father, Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah, a famous scholar as well as a *preacher* at the time (Limbong et al., 2023). Hamka's admiration for his father was written in an Ayah's book (Hamka, 2019).

Hamka's thought was also influenced by several prominent figures from the Islamic Union and Muhammadiyah, such as HOS Cokroaminto, H. Agus Salim, Sheikh

Ibrahim Musa, Sheikh Ahmad Rasyid Sutan Mansur, RM Surjopranoto and Ki Bagus Hadikusumo (Abdullah et al., 2022; Izzan, 2022).

Hamka joined the Muhammadiyah organization. His reformist-rationalist thinking is manifested in life's realities, including in his work's literature (Lestari et al., 2020; Siti Khadijah et al.) Hamka is a true muballigh. His spirit in da'wah was never ended. The heart of his father, teacher, the people around him, and muballigh triggered him to struggle. When he returned from his studies in Minangkabau, Hamka founded a *Muballigh Training Institute* (Affandi et al., 2023; Dwi Fajri et al., 2023; Feener, 2017). He also wrote his speeches and compiled his student's writing to publish in the *Khatibul Ummah* newspaper (Parwanto, 2021).

### **The Purpose of the Al-Azhar Tafsir**

The emergence of the *Tafsir Al-Azhar* began when Hamka became the administrator and manager of the Al-Azhar Mosque in Kebayoran Jakarta around 1956 (Gozali & Ibrahim, 2022; Rahim & Bachtiar, 2023). Besides being the mosque's manager, Hamka was also active in providing cultural studies in Qur'an interpretation. The results of his research were published in the *Gema Islam* magazine from 1958 until 1963, from chapters 18-19. In 1964, Hamka was detained for two years on charges of rebellion against Orde Baru. Hamka continued writing his prison work (Hamka, 1989; Alhijri et al., 2023).

The purpose of *Tafsir Al-Azhar* is explained in the introduction of his interpretation: 1) As a guide for youth or ordinary people, especially in Tanah Melay who have minimal knowledge of Arabic or '*ulum al-Qur'an* (Arifin et al., 2022); 2) As a guide or reference for *muballigh* in taking legal arguments for the benefit of da'wah and delivery of da'wah (Hamka, 1989; Hasan et al., 2022; Pradini & Nugroho, 2023).

### **Typology of Presentation Tafsir Al-Azhar**

The typology of the interpretation refers to how the mufassir presents and displays his understanding. Hamka wrote the narration of the performance based on the order of the surah in the Mushaf. However, in explaining his interpretation, he used a thematic model, which means that he interpreted one verse by other verses – for example, the concept of heaven in QS. al-Waqiah: 56, Hamka interpreted it from verses 16-26 and 27-49. Before Hamka performs the interpretation, he writes the title or theme, a group of poems along with their meanings, and interprets each verse by keeping the correlation between them. More clearly, the characteristics of the presentation of interpretations of Hamka are considered in Table 1.

**Table 1** (Typology of Interpretation Presentation)

Mufassir	Working Time	Characters who influence intellectuals
Hamka	Pre-Independence to the Old Order (20th Century AD)	H. Karim Amrullah (Hamka's Father), HOS Cokroaminoto, H. Agus Salim, Sheikh Ibrahim Musa, Sheikh Ahmad Rasyid, Sutan Masyur, RM Surjopranoto and Ki Bagus Hadikusumo

### Configuration of Interpretation on Heaven in Tafsir Al-Azhar

In interpreting the illustration of heaven, Hamka covered four points as follows. Firstly, regarding the vastness of heaven, it is 'as wide as the heavens and the earth' (QS. Ali Imran: 133). Hamka interprets the breadth of heaven not only in the context of the afterlife but, according to Hamka, people who always maximize themselves to do good and be pious, whether poor or rich, institutionalized or ordinary people, not only get a vast place in the world. Heaven hereafter, but also get good in the association in the world. So, according to Hamka, the meaning of 'the breadth of heaven' is the breadth of God's recompense from this world to the land of the hereafter (Hamka, 1989).

Secondly, about 'Paradise with rivers flowing beneath it' (QS. al-Baqarah: 25, 266, Ali Imran: 198, an-

Nisa': 122, and Muhammad: 15). Hamka interpreted 'flowing water' as a reflection of 'prosperity and fertility,' something fertile reflects shady, usefulness and peace. Furthermore, Hamka, a person concerned with the field of da'wah, used an illustration of the reality of the condition of the Indonesian people to clarify the meaning of 'fertility and prosperity which comes from the *flow of water*'.

*"... kitapun dapatlah mengambil qiyas bandingan dengan kebun kelapa di Minahasa, atau kebun di Kalimantan, atau sawah-sawah yang luas di Sulawesi yang cukup pengairannya, atau kebun cengkeh di Solok Sumatera Barat yang memberi hasil tiap pekan..."* (Hamka, 1989). [*"... we can also take qiyas compared to coconut plantations in Minahasa, or plantations in Kalimantan, or large rice fields in Sulawesi which are well irrigated, or clove plantations in Solok, West Sumatra, which yield weekly yields..."* (Hamka, 1989)].

Thirdly, regarding the 'Spouse for the inhabitants of heaven' (QS. al-Baqarah: 25), 'Pair' in verse is understood by Hamka in the context of 'wife,' i.e., *the holy angel of menstruation*. Even Hamka expanded the scope of the meaning of wife, not just an angel - including *shalehah* wives reunited and repurposed for their husbands; these wives are free from physical and spiritual disabilities (Hamka, 1989). Then the beauty of the angel (QS. ad-Dukhan: 54, as-Saffat: 47-48) "*And We made them pair with angels.*" Angels are described in all forms of

beauty, including having eyes beauty. Hamka interpreted it in two forms: 1) Beautiful eyes in the true sense, meaning they are beautiful like the eyes of beautiful girls in general; and 2) Beautiful in the sense of behavior (Hamka, 1989).

Fourthly, about plants and objects in heaven, for example, QS. al-Baqarah: 25 (*Fruits in heaven*). Hamka quoted several interpretations, saying that—indeed, visually, the appearance of the fruit is the same as in the world. However, the delicacy and enjoyment are different (Hamka, 1989). The interpretations have not provided an in-depth explanation regarding fruits in heaven because they could be driven by heaven, which is abstract (*unseen-metaphysical*). Hence, the answers still tend to be textual.

Furthermore, *about the green color in heaven (heaven, clothes, pillows) and gold and silver jewelry* (QS. al-Kahfi: 31, ar-Rahman: 64, al-Insan: 21). In the context of green silk clothing, Hamka added that *green dress is given to ahl al-Jannah* (residents of heaven) in two types of clothing: 1) *underwear* (using thin green silk), and 2) *outerwear (gamis/robes)* using green silk. In the context of *dark green paradise* (Qs. Ar-Rahman: 64), Hamka named it purple (*lembayung*) (a gorgeous color). Regarding the gold and silver jewelry given to the inhabitants of heaven, Hamka said it would be given according to the level and needs of the wearer (not excessive) (Hamka, 1989).

## Genealogy of Hamka Interpretation Thought

Based on the above interpretation, Hamka always tried contextualizing his understanding using simple language and explanations. For example, Hamka interprets it as "*a heaven with water flowing under it.*" According to him, it symbolizes fertility and prosperity. Hamka contextualized the condition of fertile gardens and agriculture in Indonesia with illustrations. Hamka did this so that people could easily understand what he conveyed. The thought of this contextual interpretation was not born naturalistically but was influenced by Hamka's experiences and habits.

As Michel Foucault said, domicile, life experiences, and teachers or admired things can influence one's thinking (Michel Foucault). Hamka was also an Islamic reformist figure, writer, and *muballigh* (preacher). It can be seen in the description of the verses about heaven above, which he interpreted in 'polite language' and explanations so that the interpretation is easily digested and understood by the public. Hamka seeks to provide easy-to-understand explanations, as is his instinct as a preacher, so the narration or language he conveys must touch listeners so they can easily understand and apply it in everyday life. On the other hand, Hamka is also an Islamic reformer; he wants people to think reformist-contextualist, not to be rigid and fanatical about one opinion, or to

oppose changes and developments in the times.

The genealogy of the birth of Hamka's reformist Islamic thought cannot be separated from the role of his teachers, including his father (*Haji Rasul*). Most of Hamka's teachers are reformist Islamic leaders and prominent scholars who play a role in Islamic da'wah. Such as Haji Oemar Said (HOS) Tjokroaminoto, H. Agus Salim, Syekh Ahmad Rasyid Sutan Mansur, Syekh Ibrahim Musa, R.M. Surjopranoto, and Ki Bagus Hadikusumo.

Besides Islamic reformist figures, Hamka's reality and life experiences also influenced his thoughts. Hamka was a member of Parliament from Masyumi and a loyal member with a dominant role in the Muhammadiyah organization (Lestari et al., 2020). This was proved by the many speeches while serving as a leader in the Muhammadiyah organization (Mundzir & Muthmainnah, 2022). Thus, it is essential to highlight that on one side, he used easy language that readers easily understand, and on the other, he tried to emphasize the concept of reformist thought of Islam. So Hamka wanted people to be more rational to understand Islam.

### **Educational Values of Interpretation of Heaven**

Based on the description presented above, there are four points discussed regarding the illustration of heaven, namely:

Firstly, about the '*broad of heaven*' (QS. Ali Imran, 133). Hamka interpreted that the '*broad*' context in verse is heaven in the afterlife and that people who maximize goodness in the world will get extensive goodness in this world and the afterlife. Thus, the educational values accommodated are 1) The importance of maximizing doing good while in this world; 2) The size of a good deed will have a good influence on those who do it; 3) People who like to do good will ideally get much kindness from the people around them; 4) Small or large good deeds will bring rewards from Allah; 5) Good deeds will bring much goodness in the world and rewards in the afterlife; and 6) The size of the '*broad*' of heaven is not only heaven in the afterlife, but includes heaven in the world because a calm, peaceful, and prosperous life is a manifestation and illustration of life in heaven, so there is the expression *baiti jannati* (my home is my heaven), which indicates that there is calm and peace in that house. Likewise, if you can form a peaceful and harmonious life in society, it will be like living in a vast paradise on earth.

Second, about '*Heaven beneath rivers flow*' (QS. Al-Baqarah/2: 25, 266, Ali Imran/3: 198, An-Nisa`/4: 122, Muhammad/47: 15). Hamka interprets '*flowing water*' as a reflection of '*prosperity and fertility*,' something fertile reflects coolness, usefulness, and peace. To clarify the meaning of '*fertile and prosperous*' from '*water flow*,' Hamka illustrates the

abundant and prosperous state of gardens or farms in Indonesia as described in the interpretation above.

The educational values that can be taken from this interpretation are: 1) Even though the verses about heaven are classified as metaphysical and abstract verses, the value can be rationalization and contextualization in daily life; 2) Heaven is a place full of pleasure, so to get it you have to make maximum effort and God's grace; 3) Fertility of crops and agriculture is God's grace and is mediated by maximum effort, so to get heaven you must do good deeds and God's love; and 4) Humans must be very grateful for the many blessings that Allah has given, whether manifested in the heart, verbally and in deeds in the form of maximum acts of worship and kindness.

Third, regarding 'Spouse for the inhabitants of heaven' (Qs. Al-Baqarah/2: 25). Hamka understands spouse' in this verse in the context of 'wife'. Wives are not only angels; they also include pious wives reunited and given back to their husbands; these wives are free from physical and spiritual defects. Educational values that can be taken are: 1) Men and women (in the context of husband and wife couples) must maximize their good deeds in their household because if both become pious individuals, it will bring happiness. In this world and the hereafter; 2) There is a need to complement, remind, and understand each other in the household so that a

harmonious family can be created; and 3) Being a good partner means taking care of each other and placing each other in their positions and portions, both in maintaining their rights and fulfilling their obligations as a wife or husband.

Fourth, about plants and objects in heaven, for example, QS. Al-Baqarah/2: 25 (Fruits in heaven). Hamka interpreted it by quoting from several interpretations, saying that - indeed, to the naked eye, the fruit's appearance is the same as in the world. However, in essence, it is delicious and enjoyable.

Then about 'the green color in heaven (heaven, clothes, pillows) as well as gold and silver jewelry' (QS. Kahfi/18: 31, Ar-Rahman/55: 64, Al-Insan/76: 21). Hamka interprets that 'green clothes' are given to *ahl al-Jannah* (residents of heaven) in two types of clothing: 1) inner clothes (using thin green silk); and 2) outer clothes (*gamis/robes*) using thick green silk. In the context of heaven, it is dark green (QS. Ar-Rahman/55: 64). Hamka named it *lembayung* (a gorgeous color). Then, regarding the gold and silver jewelry given to the inhabitants of heaven, Hamka said it would be given according to the level and needs of the wearer (not excessively).

Educational values can be drawn from it are: 1) the depiction of fruit that looks the same but tastes different; this indicates that the world and the afterlife have their dimensions, then the 'provisions' and preparations prepared must also be by the dimensions to be



targeted; 2) Then regarding clothing in heaven in two forms, namely thin clothes for inner clothes and thick clothes for outer garments, this indicates that luxury or wealth does not make people forget religious boundaries, so their clothing must be by religious law; 3) Then regarding the interpretation of the color of heaven with *lembayung* (a gorgeous color), this indicates that, for example, when dressing, use colors, patterns that are pleasing to the eye and soothing to the eye and appropriate to the time and place; 4) Hamka's interpretation of jewelry for the

occupation of heaven is given in moderation and not excessively, this indicates that even though you live in luxury, wealth and wealth, you do not need to be excessive in dressing or wearing jewelry; and 5) There is no need to talk about wealth and luxury exaggerately, you need to pay attention to the social environment around you because the social strata between people are different, some are rich, poor and even poor.

The summary of the interpretation values of Hamka in each verse can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2** Educational Values in the Interpretation of Hamka

Verses	Subject	Educational Values in the Interpretation of Hamka
QS. Ali Imran: 133.	The Broad of heaven	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The importance of maximizing doing good things while in this world;</li> <li>2. Big or small acts of kindness will have a good influence on those who do them;</li> <li>3. People who like to do good will ideally get much goodness from the people around them;</li> <li>4. Small or large good deeds will bring rewards from Allah;</li> <li>5. Good deeds that are done will bring much goodness in the world and rewards in the afterlife</li> <li>6. The size of the 'broad' of heaven is not only in the context of heaven in the afterlife but also includes heaven in the world.</li> </ol>
QS. Al-Baqarah/2: 25, 266, Ali Imran/3: 198, An-Nisa`/4: 122, Muhammad/47: 15	Heaven with rivers flowing beneath it.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make heaven metaphysical, understandable through rationalization and contextualization;</li> <li>2. To get to heaven, you must make maximum effort and God's grace;</li> <li>3. Plant and agricultural fertility is God's grace and is mediated by maximum effort;</li> <li>4. Humans must be very grateful for Allah's blessings, whether expressed in the heart, verbally, or in charity in the form of maximum acts of worship and kindness.</li> </ol>
Qs. Al-Baqarah/2: 25.	A partner for the inhabitants of heaven.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Husband and wife must maximize their good deeds in their household because if both of them become pious individuals, it will bring happiness in this world and the hereafter;</li> <li>2. There is a need to complement, remind, and understand each other in the household so that a harmonious family can be created;</li> <li>3. Being a good partner means taking care of each other and placing each other in their positions and portions, both in</li> </ol>

		maintaining their rights and fulfilling their obligations as a wife or husband.
Qs. Al-Baqarah/2: 25, QS. Kahfi/18: 31, Ar-Rahman/55: 64, Al-Insan/76: 21, QS. Ar-Rahman/55: 64.	Fruits, colors, clothes, and jewelry in heaven.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 'Preparation (provisions)' and preparations prepared between this world and the afterlife according to the intended dimension;</li> <li>2. Luxury does not make people forget religious boundaries, so clothing must be by religious law;</li> <li>3. When dressing, use colors and patterns that are pleasing to the eye and marvelous to look at and appropriate to the time and place;</li> <li>4. Dressing or wearing jewelry does not need to be excessive;</li> <li>5. It is necessary to pay attention to the surrounding social environment because the social strata between people are different.</li> </ol>

## CONCLUSION

The discussion explores Hamka's interpretation of heaven in Al-Azhar's book of Quran Interpretation, tracing the genealogy of Hamka's thoughts in interpreting the Qur'an and correlating Hamka's understanding of heaven with educational values. In conclusion, three main points can be formulated.

*Firstly*, Hamka tries to revive, rationalize, and contextualize the interpretation of the nature of heaven. Hamka thought that the nature of heaven, which is metaphysical and abstract, could be logically and rationally understood by providing concrete illustrations in the Indonesian context and explaining it in a language that was easy to understand. *Secondly*, Hamka's thoughts were inseparable from the things surrounding his life's

journey, such as domicile, teachers, life experiences, etc. Hamka's genealogy of ideas builds on both reformist Islamic thought and contextualist thought. It was formulated by many factors, including his teacher, life experience, writing, and political position in the Muhammadiyah organization. *Thirdly*, the interpretation of heaven in Al-Azhar tafsir implies educational values. Some are the importance of maximizing doing good in the world; humans must be very grateful for all the blessings that God has given; it is necessary to complement, remind, and understand each other in the household so that a harmonious family can be created; and there is no important to talk about wealth and luxury overly, but you need to pay attention to the social environment around you.

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