

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF TAFSIR AL-MIZAN BY THABATHABA'IY

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ABSTRACT

Tafsir al-Mizan is known as one of the main tafsir books among the Shi'a scholars. However, the book is read and analyzed by groups other than Shi'a scholars. Sunni scholars, too, use this tafsir book to help them understand the verses of the Quran. This article will explore the factors that make al-Mizan's interpretation accepted by Sunni scholars and examine the characteristics of the book of Tafsir al-Mizan, such as the method of interpretation, the style of interpretation, and the scholars of interpretation. This study showed that the interpreter is an adherent of the Shi'a Itsna Ashariah scholars, so some of his interpretations tend toward Shi'a thought in certain matters, such as the issue of the imamate. However, in general, this interpretation is not only a reference for adherents and the Shi'a scholars but is also used as reading material by Muslims of the Sunni scholars. The specialty of the interpretation lies in the strength of the interpreter who displays it, which is primarily derived from the Qur'an itself. As a scholar with a great soul, he took many sources of interpretation from previous books of tafsir, even from scholars other than Shi'a. As for the source of the interpretation of the hadith, it comes more from the books of hadith among the Shi'a.

Keywords: *Tafsir Al-Mizan, Al-Qur'an, Thabathaba'iy*

ABSTRAK

Tafsir al-Mizan dikenal sebagai salah satu kitab tafsir utama di kalangan mazhab Syiah. Namun demikian, Kitab tafsir tersebut ternyata juga dibaca dan ditelaah oleh berbagai kalangan di luar mazhab Syiah. Bahkan di kalangan mazhab Sunni juga banyak yang menggunakan kitab tafsir Al-Mizan ini sebagai pedoman memahami ayat-ayat al-Qur'an. Artikel bertujuan untuk menelusuri faktor-faktor yang menjadikan kitab tafsir al-Mizan ini diterima di kalangan Sunni serta menelaah beberapa hal yang terkait dengan karakteristik kitab tafsir al-Mizan seperti metode penafsiran, corak penafsiran dan mazhab tafsirnya. Kajian ini menunjukkan penafsir merupakan penganut mazhab Syi'ah Itsna Asyariah, sehingga sebagian penafsirannya cenderung mengarah pada ajaran Syi'ah dalam hal-hal tertentu seperti masalah imamah. Namun, secara umum tafsir ini tidak saja menjadi rujukan para penganut mazhab Syi'ah, tetapi juga dijadikan bahan bacaan oleh ummat Islam penganut mazhab sunni. Keistimewaan tafsirnya terletak pada kekuatan penafsirnya yang menampilkan penafsiran yang lebih utama bersumber dari al-qur'an itu sendiri. Sebagai seorang ulama yang berjiwa besar, ia banyak mengambil sumber penafsiran dari kitab-kitab tafsir sebelumnya sekalipun dari mazhab selain Syi'ah. Adapun sumber penafsiran dari hadits lebih banyak berasal dari kitab-kitab hadits kalangan Syi'ah.

Kata Kunci: *Tafsir Al-Mizan, Al-Quran, Thabathaba'iy*

A. Introduction

Tafsir al-Qur'an has been a treasure for Muslims throughout the ages. Because tafsir is an interpretation of the Qur'an with all the abilities possessed by an interpreter, The Qur'an is like an inexhaustible ocean, even though its interpreters always appear throughout the Islamic world and even outside it. The more interpretations that try to understand the Qur'an, the more the Treasury will be used as a guide for the lives of the people. The interpretation of the Qur'an has been done since the time the Apostle of Allah was alive, continued by the companions, and then continued by the generations that came after him.

Each interpretation has its own character and characteristics in accordance with the interpreter's mindset, social and political situation, as well as the time and place where and when he lives. In other words, the interpretation of the Qur'an is inseparable from the values of both the positive and negative subjectivity of the interpreter. However, the presence of tafsir from time to time is a treasure for Muslims in understanding the intent contained in the holy book of the Qur'an. The more styles and models of tafsir that appear, the more opportunities we have to create some tafsir as a guide in understanding the meaning of the Qur'an that is considered in accordance with the conditions and situations of each.

One of the books of tafsir that appeared in this modern century is Tafsir al-Mizan by Thabathaba'iy. Tafsir al-Mizan is known as a contemporary book of interpretation, especially among the Shi'ah. It is said so because in addition to the fact that the author of this commentary is indeed Shi'a, some interpretations are more likely to maintain the basic understandings of the Shi'a scholars.¹ Regardless of the author's interpretation and understanding, it is clear that the book of tafsir has scientific value and is a treasure of tafsir for Muslims, as other books of tafsir are. This paper tries to examine the characteristics of Tafsir al-Mizan, which include the author's profile, method of interpretation, style of interpretation, and sources of interpretation.

B. Thabathaba'iy

1. Identity and Education

The author of Tafsir Al-Mizan book is known as "Allamah Thabathaba'iy." His full name is Al-Sayyid Muhammad Husayn ibn Sayyid Muhammad ibn Sayyid Muhammad ibn Sayyid Muhammad ibn Sayyid Muhammad ibn al-Miraza 'Ali Ashghari Shaykh al-Islam al-Thabathaba'iy al-Tibriziy al-Qadiy. From the father's line, his lineage goes back to al-Sayyid Ibrahim Thabathaba ibn Isma'il al-Dibaj, namely Hafiz al-Hasan al-Matsna ibn Imam al-Hasan ibn 'Ali. While descended from his mother, his ancestors can be traced back to Imam al-Husayn. Hence his *laqab* is: Al-Hasani, al-Husayni, and al-Thabathaba'iy. He was born in 1321 H/1903 M to an intelligent and scholarly family.² Both his parents died when he was very young.

His primary and secondary education took place in Tabriz, his hometown, from 1911 to 1917. As was the custom of most students at that time in Persia, Thabathaba'iy sought to study a variety of very basic subject matter, such as the Qur'an, Persian language, history,

¹ Ali Ahmad Al-Salus, *Ensiklopedi Sunnah – Syi'ah, Studi Perbandingan Aqidah Dan Tafsir*, ed. by Bisri Abdussomad (Jakarta: Pustaka al-Kautsar, 2001), p. 583.

² Ihsan Al-Amin, *Al-Tafsir Bi Al-Ma'tsur Wa Tathwiruh 'Inda Al-Syi'Ah Al-Imamiyah* (Beirut: Dar al-Hadi, 2000), p. 436.

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and other religious sciences, as well as various classical works on literature. In addition to receiving basic lessons from these formal educational institutions, he also obtained additional subject matter from private teachers who were deliberately brought to his house.

Thabathaba'iy's formal education only reached elementary school. But that does not mean his education has stopped altogether. His alternative education path of choice was private education. In addition to studying specifically with teachers in their respective fields, he also studied books from various scientific fields himself from 1918–1925.³ Furthermore, at the age of 22, he moved to Najaf (Iraq) to become a student at one of the largest Shi'a universities there. His fields of study were fiqh and philosophy. His mastery of both disciplines made him worthy of the title of mujtahid. In fact, according to Nasr, "Allamah Thabathaba'iy's mastery of the disciplines of fiqh and Islamic history can lead him to the title of a great mujtahid who has influence in the political and social fields."⁴

'Allamah Thabathaba'iy, besides studying religious sciences, also studied philosophy very seriously." No less than six years of his time were spent studying, in particular, various philosophical books with his teacher, Sayyid Husayn Badkuba'i. Traditional philosophical texts became his study. Traditional philosophical texts became his study. Among these books were Ibn Sina's "*al-Syifa*," Ibn Maskawaiyh's "*Tahzib al-Akhlaq*," Mulla Shadra's "*al-Asfar al-Arba'ah*," and others. In addition, he also studied the science of ma'rifat through Mirza Ali Qadhi. In this way, he managed to master the book *Fushush al-Hikam*, one of Ibn Arabi's monumental works.⁵

Thabathaba'iy's educational period was very long, thus leading him to intellectual maturity. On the other hand, his spiritual maturity also complements his intellectual maturity. Spiritual training and *zuhudan* were undertaken in a short time. Thus, Thabathaba'iy's intellectual figure can be said to reach a balanced peak between the two aspects, namely science and spirituality.

Thabathaba'iy returned to the city of his birth, Tabriz, in 1935. In addition to being a farmer, he was also known as an educator at various educational institutions. He was there for 11 years, then emigrated to the city of Qum. At that time, Persia was occupied by the Persians in the course of World War II. In this town, he was entrusted with teaching the Qur'an, philosophy, and traditional Islamic theology. During this time in Qum, Thabathaba'iy seemed to find a very pleasant life. This is due to the fact that his activities in this location are primarily scientific in nature. He was a teacher, writer, and participant in other scientific activities.⁶

It was on the basis of the various scholarly activities he undertook during his stay in Qum that he reached the pinnacle of his intellectual career. From a scientific point of view, it can be said that he spent the most decisive period of his life there. This scientific activity continued until his death. Thabathaba'iy's stature was recognized and evaluated by his students and admirers. The consequence of his stature was the establishment of a university

³ Achmad Muchaddam Fahham, *Tuhan Dalam Filsafat 'Allamah Thabathaba'iy* (Jakarta: Teraju, 2004), p. 14.

⁴ Fahham.

⁵ Fahham.

⁶ Fahham.

that used his name as the name of the institution. The institution is located in Iran. Until now, his works have been studied by various Islamic circles, both Shi'a and Sunni.

Based on the brief description of his life history, it is clear that Thabathaba'iy is a brilliant scholar and contemporary *mufasssir* from the Shi'a *Itsna 'Asyariyah*. He died in 1402 H (1981 M) on the 18th of Muharram.⁷

2. Writings of Thabathaba'iy

As a leading scholar, Thabathaba'iy certainly left behind many works in various scientific fields. Although he was busy with various intellectual tasks such as teaching and discussing, he was still able to concentrate on pouring his ideas into writing. If you look at the material that is the subject of his various written works, you will find two main fields that are his main concern, namely philosophy and Islamic studies.

Based on the various sources obtained, Thabathaba'iy has produced at least 31 titles of works in various scientific fields. These works are also visible in terms of the setting and language he employs. In terms of place, there are 3 places he used in writing his works, among others: first, works written in the city of Najaf (Iraq) using Persian as many as 6 titles; second, works written in his hometown, Tibriz, also using Persian as many as 8 titles; third, 14 works he wrote in the city of Qum, consisting of 5 Arabic works (including the book of Tafsir al-Mizan) and 9 Persian titles.⁸ Here are some of his works:

- *Ushul al-Falsafah (10 juz)*
- *Bidayah al-Hikmah*
- *Ali wa al-Falsafah Ilahiyah*
- *Qur'an fi al-Islam*
- *Nihayah al-Hikmah*
- *Ta'liqat 'ala al-Asfar lishadri al-Muta'alihin al-Syirazi*
- *Al-Islam wa Ihtiyajat al-'Ashr*
- *Muhadatsat Ma'a Ustaz Hinri Karban*
- *Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*
- *Al-Syi'ah fi al-Islam* and others.⁹

In terms of the field of study, most of Thabathaba'iy's works are in the field of philosophy, a small part is in the field of religion in general, and two titles are on the Qur'an. This phenomenon certainly has its own influence on the interpretation of Tafsir al-Mizan. However, in terms of the style of interpretation, so far there are no experts who say he interpreted the Qur'an with a *falsafi* style.

3. Teachers and Students

As befits other scientists, Thabathaba'iy also has a series of teachers who have succeeded in bringing him to a diverse and deep level of knowledge. Among Thabathaba'iy's teachers are the follows:

- Ayatollah Muhammad Husain Isfahani (*fiqh*).
- Ayatollah Sayyid al-Hasan Isfahani (in the field of *fiqh*).

⁷ Sayyid Muhammad 'Ali Iyazi, *Al-Mufasssirun Hayatuhum Wa Manhajuhum* (Taهران: Mu'assasah al-Thiba'ah wa al-Nasyr Wizarah al-Tsaqafah wa al-Irsyad al-Islami, 1373), p. 703.

⁸ Fahham.

⁹ Iyazi.

- Ayatollah Hujjat Kuhkamari (field of history).
- Sayyid Husain Badkubi (field of philosophy).
- Sayyid Abu al-Qasim Khansari (field of mathematics), and others.¹⁰

These figures shaped Thabathaba'iy's intellect, as well as his talent for directly studying books on various fields of knowledge. Meanwhile, the people who received knowledge from him (his students) in general are countless. It can only be seen in terms of groups such as traditional student groups and intellectual elites, both Iranian and non-Iranian residents. Among his students who became famous figures are Sayyid Jalaluddin al-Ashtiyani and Murthada Muthahhari.

4. The Socio-Political Situation of His Lifetime

Based on the year of his birth, Thabathaba'iy lived in three different atmospheres: first, the end of the Qajar dynasty (1848–1922); second, the Pahlevi dynasty, which was divided into two periods, namely the Riza Shah period (1921–1941) and the Muhammad Riza Shah period (1941–1979); and third, the beginning of the reign of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The end of the Qajar period is divided into three periods: first, the reign of Nashir al-Din Shah (1848–1896); second, the reign of Mudzaffar al-Din Shah (1896–1906); and third, the reign of Muhammad Ali Shah (1906–1909).¹¹

The three socio-political atmospheres certainly influenced Thabathaba'iy's attitudes and character, both in his philosophical and religious thinking and interpretation of the Qur'an. Under the first government, Iran's political and economic face was based on taking advantage of Britain and Russia, and the leader (shah) was too weak to stop corruption in the government. This not only left Iran in a financial mess but also in an administrative crisis. As a result, anti-government popular movements emerged in various cities in Iran.¹²

The final third of the Qajar dynasty was very short, due to the lack of overall support from the people. The problem stemmed from the previous ruling government of Muhammad Ali Shah. He was an ambitious man who implemented repressive government policies. The result was the emergence of a resistance movement against the government that succeeded in ending the Qajar dynasty's rule. Muhammad Ali Shah himself eventually fled to Odessa, Russia.

The end of Muhammad Ali Shah's rule can be called a transitional period, as power was temporarily under the control of parliament. This condition did not benefit Iran politically because, since early 1907, the parliament was still under Russian and British influence until Riza Khan carried out a *coup d'état* in 1921. This *coup d'état* was the forerunner of a new dynasty, the Pahlevi's, in 1925, and Riza Shah was elected as the new Shah of Iran.

Although Riza Shah was elected as the new leader in 1925, historians date his reign to 1921. Under Riza Shah, the Pahlevi dynasty led the Iranian people into a new era of secularization and westernization. Under the shadow of British and Russian political and

¹⁰ Muhammad Husain Thabathaba'i, *Inilah Islam*, ed. by Ahsin Muhammad (Bandung: Pustaka Hidayah, 1996), p. 206.

¹¹ Fahham.

¹² Abdul Shakoor Ahsan, "Renaissance in Iran: General", *Dalam M.M. Sharif (Ed), A History of Muslim Philosophy, Vol. II* (Pakistan: Royal Book Company, 1983), p. 1524.

economic influence, Riza Shah embarked on a process of military and economic modernization, secularizing the education system, and placing the clergy under the state.

One form of secularization of the education system was the introduction of a new curriculum for theological schools and the establishment of technical schools as an alternative to the existing religious education. In fact, in 1935 a university was established, known as the University of Tehran. In order to support the ongoing program of secularization of the education system at the university, a faculty of European education was opened.

Such a situation made Thabathaba'iy choose to study at the largest Shi'a university in Najaf (Iraq) in 1925 rather than stay in Iran, or it could also be because at that time the Shi'a university in Najaf was seen as a university that presented the heritage of Islamic science that Thabathaba'iy dreamed of rather than in Iran itself, which was experiencing secularization.¹³ The political upheaval did not end there; secularization backfired, and Riza Shah was forced to hand over the reins of power to his younger son, Muhammad Riza Shah. The upheaval continued until 1953. The influence of Russia and Britain had subsided. But a more dangerous outside influence was ready to greet him. From then on, America took the place of Russia and Britain as the Pahlevi dynasty's partners. In this case, America played a role as a developer in the management of the country's economy, empowering police and military forces.

At this stage, the Americans could be said to have succeeded in making Iran a secular state, in line with the modernization process underway in the West. As a country with a strong religious base, the clerics began to call for resistance to situations that were not in accordance with their religious beliefs. This resistance later became a movement known as the Iranian Revolution, which included well-known figures such as Ayatollah Khomeini, Murthada Muthahhari, Mehdi Bazargan, and Ali Shari'ati. The movement eventually succeeded in overthrowing the Pahlevi government in 1979.¹⁴ In that year, a new history of Iran was declared, named the Islamic Republic of Iran, which still exists today.

The socio-political atmosphere has shaped Thabathaba'iy's character as a scientist who works in the field of philosophy and several other scientific fields. It is undeniable that the character of Thabathaba'iy's works covers several diverse fields, according to the developments and needs at that time. This is in accordance with some of the socio-political situations he faced. Not a few of his works discuss modern philosophy, responding to the modern developments that occurred in the Western world.

The thought developed by Thabathaba'iy can be accepted by various Islamic circles, both Shi'a and *Sunnah*, even though he adheres to Shi'a *aqidah*. In general, not many of the intellectual works of the Shi'a faith are acceptable to the Sunnis. However, because Thabathaba'iy's thoughts do not specifically address *aqidah* or *fiqh*, which are areas that are very specific to the *mazhab*, Thabathaba'iy's discussions revolve around issues of philosophy, Islamic thought, and the Qur'an, which have very little to do directly with the essence of the *mazhabs* in Islam.

¹³ Fahham.

¹⁴ Ira M. Lapidus, *Sejarah Sosial Ummat Islam III* (Jakarta: PT RajaGrafindo Persada, 2000), p. 60.

particularly about the work of Tafsir al-Mizan, which he wrote when the politics of the Iranian state was in a less stable state. In terms of scientific development, the secularization that occurred at that time and his scientific background produced a unique book of interpretation. So that the interpretation experts were difficult to determine the slant of the style of interpretation of this tafsir, because it almost covers various disciplines. Although some scholars include this tafsir in the style of kalam because the Shi'a style of kalam is thickened in it, this opinion does not have the support of the mufasssirs and the majority of scholars.

C. Tafsir Al-Mizan

1. Background and History

The full title of this tafsir book is "*Al-Mizan fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an*,"¹⁵ but the popular short name is "*Tafsir al-Mizan*." This tafsir was completed in 1957 H/1375 M. *Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah* Tehran published it for the first time that year as well. The second publication was done in 1971, and the third publication was done in 1974.¹⁶ Another publisher was *Mu'assasah al-'Alamiy li al-Mathbu'ah*, Beirut, in 1973. This Beirut publication consists of 20 volumes of approximately 450 pages each. *Muassasah Nasyr al-Islamiy al-Tiba'ah li Jami'ah al-Mudarrisin* also published the book, the first issue without mentioning the year consisting of 20 juz and 10 volumes.

The details based on each *juz* of this tafsir based on the 1973 Beirut printing are as follows:

- Volume I: *Surah al-Fatihah* and *al-Baqarah* verses 1-182.
- Volume II: *Surah al-Baqarah* verses 183-286.
- Volume III: *Surah Ali 'Imran* verses 1-120.
- Volume IV: *Surah Ali 'Imran* verses 121-200 and *al-Nisa'* verses 1-76.
- Volume V: *Surah al-Nisa'* verses 77-126 and *al-Ma'idah* verses 1-54.
- Volume VI: *Surah al-Ma'idah* verses 55-120.
- Volume VII: *Surah al-An'am*.
- Volume VIII: *Surah al-'Araf*.
- Volume IX: *Surahs al-Anfal* and *al-Taubah*.
- Volume X: *Surah Yunus, Hud* verses 1-99.
- Volume XI: *Surah Hud* verses 100-123, *Yusuf* and *al-Ra'du*.
- Volume XII: *Surah Ibrahi, al-Hijr* and *al-Nahl*.
- Volume XIII: *Surahs al-Isra' and al-Kahf*.
- Volume XIV: *Surahs Maryam, Thaha, al-Anbiya* and *al-Hajj*.
- Volume XV: *Surah al-Mukminun-al-Naml*.
- Volume XVI: *Surah Qashash - Saba'*.
- Volume XVII: *Surah al-Fathir-Hamim Sajadah*.
- Volume XVIII: *Surah al-Shura-al-Zariyat*.
- Volume XIX: *Surah al-Thur-Haqqah*.
- Volume XX: *Surah al-Ma'arij-al-Nas*.

¹⁵ Iyazi.

¹⁶ Iyazi.

Every great work has a historical background that is interesting to study. It is even more interesting if the author writes in a field that is different from most of his other scientific works. As explained above, Thabathaba'iy as far as is known, only wrote two works related to the Qur'an, namely Tafsir al-Mizan and al-Qur'an fi al-Islam. Here the question arises: what is the background that causes Thabathaba'iy's heart to write the Tafsir book?

Among the reasons that are significant enough for Thabathaba'iy to write al-Mizan tafsir is to create a book of interpretation that is free from the subjectivity of the interpreter. He believed that the existing interpretation books were heavily influenced by the author's various personal backgrounds. As a result, there are various interpretations of certain styles such as *mazhabiy*, *falsafi*, *kalam*, *shufiy*, *balaghi*, and others. According to Thabathaba'iy, such things have reduced the deep textual and contextual meanings of the Qur'an's verses.¹⁷ Thus, they have different methods for studying the meanings of the Qur'anic verses. Furthermore, each group understands the verses according to their respective methods to preserve and emphasize their sect.¹⁸

Meanwhile, many of the mufassirs who came after them simply accepted the opinions of their predecessors. In other words, later interpreters no longer interpret the verses of the Qur'an by exerting all their abilities but only comment on existing interpretations, and some even only summarize them. More than that, there are those who criticize the interpretations before them without giving a more appropriate answer in accordance with the spirit of the Qur'an. So through the discussion of *Hawzah 'Ilmiyyah*, Thabathaba'iy saw that there was an urgent need among the people for an alternative interpretation that could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the explicit and implicit meanings of the Qur'an. This is a problem that needs to be addressed immediately to maintain a better understanding because the Qur'an serves as the highest text in Islam.

Another background to the writing of Tafsir al-Mizan is that it is one of the steps to overcome the rise of materialism in various parts of the world, not least in the Islamic world and especially in Iran. Philosophical and rationalist answer is one of the answers to the phenomenon of modernization and westernization that is being hit. In its early stages, Thabathaba'iy used the medium of da'wah as a means of conveying his tafsir thoughts at the University of Qum. Then the effort published its first juz interpretation in 1956. Stage by stage, it continued to be done, so that the last *juz* (*juz XX*) was ready to be published in 1973.

Regarding the background of the name al-Mizan itself, according to some opinions, this tafsir contains various thoughts from various scholars of tafsir in the previous period. In addition to taking the various opinions of the mufassir, he also considered the opinions of other scholars in various scientific fields. In order to achieve an interpretive opinion that is considered the closest to the truth, careful and in-depth consideration is needed so that the tafsir is called "al-Mizan."¹⁹

¹⁷ Muhammad Husain Thabathaba'i, *Al-Mizan Fi Tafsir Al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyah, 1973), p. 5.

¹⁸ Muhammad Husain Thabathaba'i, *Tafsir Al-Mizan: Mengupas Ayat-Ayat Ruh Dan Alam Barzah*, ed. by Syamsuri Rifa'i (Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus, 1991), p. 30.

¹⁹ Thabathaba'i, *Al-Mizan Fi Tafsir Al-Quran*.

2. Methods and styles of interpretation

In terms of the method of interpretation, this tafsir book can be classified as tafsir tahliliy, which interprets the verses of the Qur'an in accordance with the order of the arrangement of the *Mushaf* al-Qur'an, starting with Surah *al-Fatihah* and ending with Surah *al-Nas*. Based on the source of interpretation, this tafsir book includes tafsir bi *al-ma'tsur*, because more interpret the verses of the Qur'an based on the Qur'an itself, based on hadith, and based on *qawl al-Shahabat*. However, some argue that Tafsir al-Mizan is a combination of Tafsir *bi al-Ma'tsur* and *bi al-Ra'yi*. This is as expressed by Ihsan al-Amin, who said that the book of Tafsir al-Mizan is a combination of thought (*ma'qul*) and reasoning (**manqul**).²⁰

In addition, in terms of the style of interpretation, it can be said that the tafsir covers a wide range (overall knowledge) such as the sciences of the Qur'an itself, hadith science, Kalam science, philosophy, morals, history, society, politics, and other sciences.²¹ Mahmud Ayyub revealed that Tafsir al-Mizan represents the growth of all traditions and their aspects. Tafsir al-Mizan is a work that is simultaneously legal, theological, philosophical, mystical, social, and scientific, even moderate and polemical. It is thus rooted in the classical Shi'a tradition.²² Other commentaries, on the other hand, are not so expansive and rich in approach and focus more on contemporary problems facing the Islamic world, such as political, economic, and intellectual ones brought by the Western world.

With such style and method, this tafsir can be said to be able to combine various methods, styles, and approaches. In other words, there is very little subjectivity that may be caused because it does not lean towards one scientific field, which is usually very dependent on the scientific background of the interpreter. However, in terms of the use of hadith and the words of the companions, they follow the pattern that applies in the Shi'a scholars. This can be seen from the sources of hadith narrators and other reference books.

3. Systematics of Interpretation and Characteristics of Tafsir al-Mizan

Based on the order of the layout of the writing, the book begins with a *muqaddimah* from the author, then continues with the interpretation of the letter. In terms of the systematics of interpretation, the Tafsir al-Mizan order is as follows:

- Grouping several verses that are considered to have similarities or similar themes and have a relationship between verses
- interpretation of verses at length, which is given the title "*Bayan*."
- Partially continued with a discussion of opinions from the books of other scholars. This stage also ends with Thabathaba'iy's own analysis. This stage is entitled "*Bahts Rawa'iy*."

Sometimes the interpretation is simply "*Bayan*," without adding "*Bahts Rawa'iy*." These are the stages of interpretation; then proceed with the interpretation of another group of verses.²³

²⁰ Al-Amin.

²¹ Al-Amin.

²² Mahmud Ayyub, *Qur'an Dan Para Penafsirnya*, ed. by Nick G. Dharma Putra (Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus, 1992), p. 57.

²³ Thabathaba'i, *Al-Mizan Fi Tafsir Al-Quran*.

In addition to having the order of interpretation as above, it also has special characteristics (its characteristics), among others:

- The interpretation is characterized by the title "*Bayan*."
- There is the expression "*qauluhu ta'ala*" in giving the interpretation of certain passages.
- In giving the conclusion of the interpretation, he uses the expression "*Aqulu*."
- When gathering various opinions for his discussion, he used the title "*Bahtsu rawa'iy*."
- Most of his references are tafsirs of the Shi'a school, such as Tafsir *al-'Iyasyi* and so on.
- References to the hadith of the Prophet are also mostly sourced from Shi'a books or narrations.

4. Interpretation Sources

Although this tafsir prioritizes the interpretation of the Qur'an within itself and continues with the sunnah and the companions, it is also supported by other sources in the form of books of interpretation and in other fields that have appeared before. Among these titles are:

- *Jami' al-Bayan* by al-Thabary.
- *Al-Khasysyaf* by Zamakhshary.
- *Majma' al-Bayan* by al-Tabrasyi.
- *Mafatih al-Ghaib* by Fakhruddin al-Razi.
- *Anwar al-Tanzil* by al-Baidhawiy.
- *Ruh al-Ma'aniy* by al-Alusiy.
- *Tafsir Dur al-Mantsur* by al-Suyuthy.
- *Al-Burhan* by al-Bahrani.
- *Al-Nur al-Tsaqalainy* by al-Huwaizy

In other areas that support the interpretation, he also quotes from books:

- *Majma' al-Bayan wa al-Mufradat* by al-Raghib al-Isfahany.
- *Al-Shuhhah* by al-Jauhary.
- *Lisan al-'Arab* by Luwis Ma'luf. and other hadith books.²⁴

5. Privileges of Tafsir al-Mizan

As agreed by Muslims, the Qur'an is the main source in various aspects, including in interpreting the Qur'an itself. One of the benefits of the book Tafsir al-Mizan is that the interpreter attempts to interpret the verses of the Qur'an with himself before proceeding with the interpretation derived from the prophet's sunnah. In addition, this tafsir book is combined with discussions related to the composition of sentences and sounds, such as *asbab al-nuzul* and *munasabah*, from various segments. Furthermore, it discusses the interpretations derived from the companions and tabi'in and tries to avoid false narrations and *israilliyat*.²⁵

The discussion and study of the Qur'an by Thabathaba'i has its own specialty. The specialty in question lies in the fact that when he explains the purpose, understanding, and

²⁴ Iyazi.

²⁵ Al-Amin.

meanings of the Qur'an, he first refers to the Qur'an itself before he refers to other sources. This is different from most *mufasssirs*, both past and present, many of whom have preconceptions and precipitations of thought that they obtain by studying problems, getting acquainted with schools of philosophy and theology, or by following certain schools of *kalam* and *fiqh*.²⁶

Furthermore, Ihsan al-Amin argues that Thabathaba'iy in terms of the interpretation of the Qur'an has the belief that the Qur'an can be interpreted with the Qur'an itself; it does not even need to be given to another as an interpretation because it is a *mu'jizat*. If the Qur'an requires an explanation other than the Qur'an itself, it can be said that the proof of the Qur'an is not perfect. While the hadiths and opinions of scholars from various sciences that are used as interpretation, are only a support to strengthen, not the main interpretation.²⁷

Furthermore, it can be stated that some topics in Tafsir al-Mizan are interpreted with *maudhu'iy* interpretation. This style is very rarely found in other books of interpretation. This *maudhu'iy* interpretation is done on topics that are considered important (basic) and considered necessary to understand comprehensively. Among the important things in question are such things as issues of tawhid, worship, repentance, prayer, sustenance, jihad, and others.²⁸

D. Conclusions

Tafsir al-Mizan is a contemporary tafsir with the *Tahlili* method because the interpretation is in accordance with the order of mushab. The interpreter is an adherent of the Shi'a *Itsna Ashariah* scholars, so some of his interpretations tend toward the Shi'a scholars in certain matters, such as the issue of the imamate. But in general, this tafsir is not only a reference for the Shi'ah adherents, but also used as reading material by Muslims who adhere to the Sunni scholars. The specialty of this tafsir lies in the power of the interpreter to present the interpretation that is primarily derived from the Qur'an itself. As a scholar with a great soul, he took many sources of interpretation from previous books of tafsir, even from schools other than Shi'a. While the source of interpretation of the hadith takes more from the books of hadith among the Shi'a. This tafsir is spread not only in countries that adhere to Shi'aism, but also in various parts of the Islamic world. This gives an indication that this commentary was not written for the Shi'a only, but for all Muslims. In Islamic countries that adhere to the Sunni scholars, this interpretation gets the same amount of study as the interpretations that are considered Sunni.

²⁶ Muhammad Husain Thabathaba'i, *Mengungkap Rahasia Al-Qur'an*, ed. by A. Malik Madaniy and Ilyas Hasan, 2009, p. 445.

²⁷ Thabathaba'i, *Mengungkap Rahasia Al-Qur'an*.

²⁸ Thabathaba'i, *Mengungkap Rahasia Al-Qur'an*.

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