

## **THE SYMBOLIC INTERPRETATION OF QURAIISH SHIHAB ON THE HADITH OF WOMEN'S CREATION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The complete negation of misogynistic hadiths towards women is still not possible due to a textual and non-comprehensive understanding of the hadiths. This article aims to address this issue by presenting an analysis of Quraish Shihab's interpretation of the hadith regarding the creation of Eve from Adam's curved rib bone and differentiating his view from several other commentators. Using a literature review approach, this study shows that the term "curved rib bone" is not intended to disrespect women but merely as an illustration. Philosophically, the curved rib symbolizes women's inherent nature, which, when hardened, makes it difficult for men to straighten it out. This depiction aims to make men aware of and understand women's nature and to develop a wise attitude towards them. Quraish Shihab's ideas can be a recommendation for understanding hadiths with misogynistic nuances so that biases in understanding and actions towards women can be minimized effectively.

**Keywords:** *Quraish Shihab, Interpretation, Hadith, Women.*

### **ABSTRAK**

Pemahaman hadis misoginis terhadap perempuan belum bisa negasikan secara sempurna. Hal ini disebabkan oleh pemahaman yang tekstual dan tidak komprehensif dalam memaknai hadis. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menjawab persoalan tersebut dengan menyajikan analisis penafsiran Quraish Shihab terhadap hadis mengenai penciptaan Hawa dari tulang rusuk Adam yang melengkung, dan membedakan pandangannya dengan beberapa mufassir lain. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kajian kepustakaan, kajian ini menunjukkan bahwa istilah "tulang rusuk bengkok" bukan dimaksudkan untuk tidak menghormati perempuan, melainkan sebagai hanya sebagai ilustrasi. Secara filosofis, tulang rusuk yang melengkung melambangkan sifat bawaan perempuan, yang jika mengeras akan menyulitkan laki-laki untuk meluruskannya. Penggambaran ini bertujuan agar laki-laki menyadari dan memahami sifat perempuan, serta mengembangkan sikap yang bijaksana terhadap mereka. Pemikiran Quraish Shihab bisa menjadi rekomendasi dalam memahami hadis-hadis yang bernuansa misoginis agar pembiasaan pemahaman dan tindakan terhadap perempuan bisa diminimalisir dengan baik.

**Kata Kunci:** *Quraish Shihab, Tafsir, Hadis, Perempuan.*

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## **A. Introduction.**

The dialectic problem between women and men is still being discussed today. These two creations of God are not exempt from differentiation arguments from scholars, including scholars of interpretation (mufassir), hadith, and the humanities. Women activists created a variety of narratives in response to the unfair treatment that women frequently experience in society and the family. This then leads to the emergence of various lengthy debates among contemporary scholars about the relationship between men and women from various scholarly perspectives.<sup>1</sup>

In one popular religious view, women are positioned as weak. This is based on the interpretation of hadiths about the origin of women's creation, where Eve, the first woman, was created from the crooked rib of Prophet Adam. Understanding of the hadith then often becomes a justification for men to position women. Such understanding then indirectly impacts various actions and behaviors that degrade women. The further impact of this is the loss of women's rights as human beings equal to men.<sup>2</sup>

In order to interpret the hadith about the creation of women from the crooked rib, scholars and intellectuals have developed numerous philosophies and reinterpretations. However, in many ways, discrimination and subordination against women still occur.<sup>3</sup> Negative views of women, such as cynicism and the notion that women are weak creatures who must be led, guided, supervised, and doubted, still occur at various levels of social life. What is regrettable then is that the impact of such views often gives birth to violence against women in the form of discrimination, segregation, subordination, and physical and sexual violence.<sup>4</sup>

Religious doctrines that place women as weak creatures, lacking reason, bringing bad luck, and seductive beings are basically born from a paradigm and teaching of religion that is less comprehensive. Both are conveyed by religious figures and by influencers in the current digital era. Religious understanding that places women as weak and low humans cannot be justified because it is actually contrary to the substance of religious teachings and the behavior of Prophet Muhammad SAW, who treated women so humanely and highly valued them.<sup>5</sup>

In Indonesia, a more open view of the hadith of the creation of women is presented by a well-known contemporary mufassir, M. Quraish Shihab. He is known for his moderate way of interpreting the Qur'an. He does this by reading it in a way that makes sense in the

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<sup>1</sup> Mayola Andika, 'Reinterpretasi Ayat Gender Dalam Memahami Relasi Laki-Laki Dan Perempuan (Sebuah Kajian Kontekstual Dalam Penafsiran)', *Musāwa Jurnal Studi Gender Dan Islam*, 17.2 (2019), 137 <<https://doi.org/10.14421/musawa.2018.172.137-152>>.

<sup>2</sup> Mina Mudrikah, 'Siti Hawa Dalam Perspektif Muhammad Asad Dan Christoph Barth', *Al-Bayan: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir*, 3.2 (2019) <<https://doi.org/10.15575/al-bayan.v3i2.4117>>.

<sup>3</sup> manembu, 'Peranan Perempuan Dalam Pembangunan Masyarakat Desa (Suatu Studi Di Desa Maumbi Kecamatan Kalawat Kabupaten Minahasa Utara)', *POLITICO: Jurnal Ilmu Politik*, 7.1 (2017), 1–11.

<sup>4</sup> Muhammad Wahyu Saiful Huda and Rizqiya Lailatul Izza, 'Quo Vadis Perlindungan Kekerasan Seksual: Urgensi RUU PKS Sebagai Perlindungan Korban Kekerasan Seksual', *Ikatan Penulis Mahasiswa Hukum Indonesia Law Journal*, 2.2 (2022), 172–87.

<sup>5</sup> Iwan Romadhan Sitorus Muhammad Aziz Zakiruddin, 'Wanita Dalam Kepemimpinan Dan Perspektif Politik Amina Wadud', *Jurnal Al-Imarah*, 7.2 (2022), 184–94 <<https://doi.org/10.29300/imr.v7i2.7466>>.

context of the times, so that the values of Islamic teachings seem kind and humane. The cultural and literary society also influences Quraish Shihab's interpretation model, so Quraish Shihab's interpretation of the Qur'an is a direct result of societal culture. In this article, the author will describe Quraish Shihab's view on the hadith of the creation of Eve from the rib of Prophet Adam. To achieve this goal, the author uses a qualitative descriptive approach. The primary source of this writing is the book "Women" by M. Quraish Shihab, while the secondary sources are gathering related writings about the hadith of the creation of Eve from the crooked rib of Prophet Adam from articles, books, and other literature related to Quraish Shihab's thought.

## B. Result and Discussion

### 1. Some Views of Mufassir

حَدَّثَنَا عَمْرُو النَّاقِدُ، وَابْنُ أَبِي عُمَرَ، - وَاللَّفْظُ لِابْنِ أَبِي عُمَرَ - قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا  
سُفْيَانُ، عَنْ أَبِي الزِّنَادِ، عَنِ الْأَعْرَجِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ  
وَسَلَّمَ " إِنَّ الْمَرْأَةَ خُلِقَتْ مِنْ ضِلْعٍ لَنْ تَسْتَقِيمَ لَكَ عَلَى طَرِيقَةٍ فَإِنْ اسْتَمْتَعْتَ بِهَا اسْتَمْتَعْتَ  
بِهَا وَبِهَا عَوْجٌ وَإِنْ ذَهَبْتَ تُقِيمُهَا كَسَرْتَهَا وَكَسَرُهَا طَلَاقُهَا " .

*"Abu Huraira (Allah be pleased with him) reported: Woman has been created from a rib and will in no way be straightened for you; so if you wish to benefit by her, benefit by her while crookedness remains in her. And if you attempt to straighten her, you will break her, and breaking her is divorcing her."*<sup>6</sup>

According to Hamka,<sup>7</sup> the hadith above cannot be interpreted literally because it is merely a metaphor. Hamka rejects earlier scholars' explanations that Eve was literally created from Prophet Adam's rib. However, according to Hamka, it is the behavior or attitude of women that tends to be flexible, easily influenced, and easily broken if forced, like the rib.

Hamka suggests in his Tafsir Al-Azhar that men should know the basic nature of women, which is to be flexible, weak, and less intelligent, to create a harmonious and happy family. Furthermore, a man who knows the basic nature of a woman is advised to win her affection with gentleness and love.<sup>8</sup> If we understand Buya Hamka's interpretation unilaterally, he would be considered a gender-biased mufassir. However, if we comprehensively examine his work, Hamka is a gender-friendly mufassir who recognizes gender equality. This argument is demonstrated in Hamka's Tafsir work, where he emphasizes women's competence, such as in the leadership story of Queen Saba, Khadijah's

<sup>6</sup> 'Sahih Muslim 1467b - The Book of Suckling - كتاب الرضاع - Sunnah.Com - Sayings and Teachings of Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه و سلم)' <<https://sunnah.com/muslim:1467b>> [accessed 7 January 2023].

<sup>7</sup> Hamka, *Buya Hamka Berbicara Tentang Perempuan* (Jakarta: Gema Insani, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Hamka, 2020

role in assisting Muhammad in establishing Islam, Ummu Umarah's literacy skills, and Aisha's intelligence in criticizing her companions when they misinterpreted hadith.<sup>9</sup> Hamka also refutes the narrative of earlier mufasssirs who claimed that women are less intelligent. According to Hamka, both men and women have the same level of intelligence, so uniting the intelligence of men and women will result in a harmonious family.<sup>10</sup>

Wahbah Zuhaili explains that indeed Eve was created from the rib of Prophet Adam, and the wisdom behind it is to make someone attracted to their own kind, namely human beings. This is to create love and harmonious relationships among them. However, the process of creating Eve from the rib of Prophet Adam only applies to Eve and not to other women. In contrast, Ibn Kathir's explanation is slightly different, as he says that Eve was created from the left rib of the Prophet Adam. Ibn Kathir states that when Prophet Adam was sleeping, his left rib was taken, and when he woke up, he was surprised to find Eve beside him. The aforementioned hadith supports Ibn Kathir's interpretation of Eve's creation from the rib, but it appears that Bani Israil's interpretation of the *isra'liyyat* had an impact on him.<sup>11</sup>

## **2. Quraish Shihab's interpretation**

Quraish Shihab believes that the hadith about the creation of women from a bent rib bone provides an explanation to men that women have special qualities and characteristics that contrast with men. The philosophy behind this hadith is that men should understand the attitudes of women. This is useful so that men do not force women into something that is not normal, because if forced, it will have fatal consequences, which are similar to straightening a bent rib bone. Of course, straightening a rib bone is highly unlikely, as it will result in a fracture. This means that a man must first know the character of a woman so that, when he faces her, he can act wisely and treat her well.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, Quraish Shihab explains that the meaning of the hadith about the creation of women from a bent rib bone is not intended to be a form of insult. Rather, the hadith indicates that the language used is just an illustration from Prophet Muhammad as a way of emphasizing to men that they should be fair and wise in dealing with women. This philosophy contributes to the relationship between men and women so that harmony can be achieved in household.<sup>13</sup>

Quraish Shihab disagrees with the idea that Eve was created from Adam's rib bone because there is no clear evidence in the Qur'an and Sunnah that women were created from Adam's rib bone, but the process of their creation is different from men.<sup>14</sup> As emphasized by Rasyid Rida, this story is only found in the Old Testament (Genesis II: 21–22), which says, "While Adam was sleeping deeply, a rib bone was taken from him, and it was covered with flesh. From the rib bone that had been taken out, Allah created a woman." If this story

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<sup>9</sup> Hamka, *Buya Hamka Berbicara Tentang Perempuan*.

<sup>10</sup> Hamka, 2020

<sup>11</sup> Supriyanto, 'Isrâ'iliyyât Dalam Tafsir Al-Qur'ân Alazhîm Karya Ibnu Katsir', *Al-A'raf Jurnal Pemikiran Islam Dan Filsafat*, Xii.2 (2015), 2–9.

<sup>12</sup> Muhammad Quraish Shihab, *Perempuan* (Ciputat: Penerbit Lentera Hati, 2018).

<sup>13</sup> Umar Ali And Ridho Ridho, 'Nalar Ekofeminisme Dalam Pemikiran Hukum Waris M. Quraish Shihab', *Fitua: Jurnal Studi Islam*, 2.1 (2021), 1–19

<sup>14</sup> Shihab.

was not told in the Old Testament, then the story of women being created from Adam's ribs would not be heard by Muslim believers.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, if we examine it further, the process of human creation, namely men and women, is already clearly explained in the Qur'an and Hadith. As in the Quran, Surah Al-Mu'minun verses 12–14; Surah Al-Hijr verses 26, 28, and 33; At-Thariq verses 6–7;<sup>16</sup> Al-Mursalat verses 20–23; and Al-Qiyamah verses 37–38. In the writer's opinion, the above verses are also explained in detail by the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad, as follows:

حَدَّثَنَا مُسَدَّدٌ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا حَمَّادٌ، عَنْ عُبَيْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ أَبِي بَكْرٍ، عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ  
عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " إِنَّ اللَّهَ - عَزَّ وَجَلَّ - وَكَلَّ بِالرَّحِمِ مَلَكًا  
يَقُولُ يَا رَبِّ نُطْفَةٌ، يَا رَبِّ عَلَقَةٌ، يَا رَبِّ مُضْغَةٌ. فَإِذَا أَرَادَ أَنْ يَقْضِيَ خَلْقَهُ قَالَ أَذْكَرٌ  
أَمْ أُنْثَى شَقِيٌّ أَمْ سَعِيدٌ فَمَا الرِّزْقُ وَالْأَجَلُ فَيُكْتَبُ فِي بَطْنِ أُمِّهِ ."

*"Narrated Anas bin Malik: The Prophet said, "At every womb Allah appoints an angel who says, 'O Lord! A drop of semen, O Lord! A clot. O Lord! A little lump of flesh." Then if Allah wishes (to complete) its creation, the angel asks, (O Lord!) Will it be a male or female, a wretched or a blessed, and how much will his provision be? And what will his age be?' So all that is written while the child is still in the mother's womb."*<sup>17</sup>

The aforementioned hadith clearly states that the process of creating human beings, both male and female, is essentially the same, starting with the sperm that turns into a clot of blood and then a piece of flesh. Another hadith in the narration of the Muslim adds that Allah then instructs the angels to breathe the soul into the body that has become a piece of flesh. This means that there is no difference in creation between males and females, as both are created from the same origin and process. On the other hand, the story of the creation of Eve from Prophet Adam's rib bone is a narrative that originates from Isra'iliyyat stories found in the Old Testament.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the Quranic verses also explain in detail the process of human creation. As stated in Surah Al-Imran, verse 59, the Quran provides a detailed account of how human beings are created:

إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَىٰ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ ۖ خَلَقَهُ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

<sup>15</sup> Atik Wartini, 'Tafsir Feminis M.Quraish Shihab: Telaah Ayat-Ayat Gender Dalam Tafsir Al-Misbah', *Palastren : Jurnal Studi Gender*, 6.2 (2013), 473–94 >.

<sup>16</sup> Hamzani Aulia Rahman & Abdul Hafiz Alfaton, 'Tinjauan Al Qur'an Dalam Term Kecerdasan Intelektual', *PALAPA*, 9.1 (2021), 266-280. <<https://doi.org/palapa.v9i2.1221>>.

<sup>17</sup> 'Sahih Al-Bukhari 318 - Menstrual Periods - كتاب الحيض - Sunnah.Com - Sayings and Teachings of Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه و سلم)' <<https://sunnah.com/bukhari:318>> [accessed 7 January 2023].

<sup>18</sup> Muhammad Abduh Wahid, 'Teori Mengenai Penciptaan Manusia Dalam Hadis Nabi; Kajian Ma'anil Hadis', *Tahdis: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Al-Hadis*, 10.2 (2020)

## Abdul Majid

### *The Symbolic Interpretation of Quraish Shihab on the Hadith of Women's Creation*

*“Indeed, the example of Jesus to Allah is like that of Adam. He created Him from dust; then He said to him, "Be," and he was”.*

According to Muhammad bin Salah Asy-Syawadifi, the above verse explains that Prophet Adam was indeed created from soil, and then Allah made him a human being. However, the true meaning of the creation of Prophet Adam from soil is that he was created without both parents (father and mother). This verse was revealed in response to the debate between Prophet Muhammad SAW and Uskub Najran, who asked about the father of Prophet Isa. Then the Prophet answered that he was created just as Prophet Adam was created.<sup>19</sup>

Allah SWT said in Surah Al-Khafi verse 37:

قَالَ لَهُ صَاحِبُهُ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهُ أَكَفَرْتَ بِالَّذِي خَلَقَكَ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ سَوَّاهُ رَجُلًا

*“His companion said to him while he was conversing with him, "Have you disbelieved in He who created you from dust and then from a sperm-drop and then proportioned you [as] a man?”*

The verse above is based on the time of the Prophet, when there was a Muslim farmer who was arrogant and whose farming yield was abundant and plentiful. After being reminded by his friend that he was created from the soil, he still defied the warning. Until a time came when all of his harvest failed and vanished. Eventually, he realized the warning from his friend.<sup>20</sup>

Allah SWT said in Surah Al-Hajj verse 5:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّنَ الْبَعْثِ فَإِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِّنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ عَلَقَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ مُّضْغَةٍ مُّخَلَّقَةٍ وَغَيْرِ مُّخَلَّقَةٍ لِّنُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ وَنُقَرُّ فِي الْأَرْحَامِ مَا نَشَاءُ إِلَىٰ آجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ نُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ثُمَّ لِتَبْلُغُوا أَشُدَّكُمْ وَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُتَوَقَّىٰ وَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُرَدُّ إِلَىٰ أَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ لِكَيْلَا يَعْلَمَ مِنْ بَعْدِ عِلْمٍ شَيْئًا وَتَرَىٰ الْأَرْضَ هَامِدَةً فَإِذَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَتْ وَأَنْبَتَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ بَهِيجٍ

*“O People, if you should be in doubt about the Resurrection, then [consider that] indeed, We created you from dust, then from a sperm-drop, then from a clinging clot, and then from a lump of flesh, formed and unformed - that We may show you. And*

<sup>19</sup> Marlion Ferki Ahmad and Wijayanti Tri Yuliana, ‘Makna Ayat-Ayat Perumpamaan Di Dalam Surat Az-Zumar’, *Pemikiran Islam*, 43.2 (2019), 125–43.

<sup>20</sup> Muhammm Arif, *Filsafat Ekonomi Islam* (Medan: Merdeka Kreasi Group, 2022).

*We settle in the wombs whom We will for a specified term, then We bring you out as a child, and then [We develop you] that you may reach your [time of] maturity. And among you is he who is taken in [early] death, and among you is he who is returned to the most decrepit [old] age so that he knows, after [once having] knowledge, nothing. And you see the earth barren, but when We send down upon it rain, it quivers and swells and grows [something] of every beautiful kind."*

The above verse explains the process of human creation, which includes important classifications of human organs. Thus, it can be classified that the process of human creation is divided into mudghah mukhallaqah and mudghah ghairu mukhallaqah, which means the process of human creation in perfect and imperfect (defective) forms.<sup>21</sup>

Allah SWT said in Surah As-Sajadah verse 7:

الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ وَبَدَأَ خَلْقَ الْإِنْسَانِ مِنْ طِينٍ

*"Who perfected everything which He created and began the creation of man from clay."*

According to Ar-Razi, the term "thiin" is defined as black mud that can change.<sup>22</sup> Other references suggest that the above verse implies the perfection of human creation. According to Ali Yafie, the Qur'an explains that there is growth and fundamental change in human beings. According to Al-Nahlawi, Allah SWT created humans with complete organs, namely the heart and hearing. These organs contribute to human beings' ability to read and analyze the surrounding world, thus obtaining many benefits.<sup>23</sup>

In several of the above verses, it is explained that humans, both men and women, are created from the earth. The creation process has also been clearly explained in detail in the Qur'an. This is evidence of the perfection of the Qur'an. The substance that we need to remember together is that there is no differentiation in the creation of men and women. The above verse is general and applies to the creation of both men and women.

Therefore, degrading women on the grounds that they were created from a rib is unfounded. As explained by the hadith that women were created from a bent rib, then some scholars interpreted the bent rib as women being less intelligent, weak, and hesitant. This cannot be understood literally; rather, the hadith is metaphorical and does not reflect its original meaning. If the hadith is understood literally, it contradicts the hadith and verses of the Qur'an that explain the process of human creation.

### C. Conclusion

Quraish Shihab does not believe that Eve was created from the rib of Prophet Adam, as it contradicts the hadiths and verses of the Qur'an regarding the process of human creation.

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<sup>21</sup> Sofiul Iman & Muhammad Lutfi, 'Mengelola Dan Mendidik Anak Dengan Hati', *An-Nisa*, 11.1 (2018), 51–60.

<sup>22</sup> Jarman Arroisi, *Psikologi Islam Membaca Anatomi Pemikiran Jiwa Fakhr Al-Din Al-Razi* (Ponorogo: UNIDA GONTOR PRESS, 2022).

<sup>23</sup> Ahmad Nur Alam Bakhtir, *Manusia Dalam Perspektif Pendidikan Al-Qur'an* (Yogyakarta: Nas Media Pustaka, 2021).

## Abdul Majid

### *The Symbolic Interpretation of Quraish Shihab on the Hadith of Women's Creation*

Quraish Shihab clearly rejects the interpretation of past scholars and instead offers a new interpretation, stating that the bent rib is not a form of insult towards the Prophet but rather an illustration. The philosophy behind the bent rib is that it reflects the tendency of women to be inflexible, which, when hardened, results in difficulty, much like straightening a bent rib. This is aimed at helping men understand and appreciate the inherent nature of women in order to cultivate a wise attitude towards them. According to the author, Muhammad Quraish Shihab differs from Buya Hamka, Ibnu Katsir, and Wahbah Zuhaili, as these three scholars clearly state that women tend to be weak and lacking in intellect. However, in his book titled "Women," Quraish Shihab does not state that the definition of the bent rib implies weakness and a lack of intellect in women, but rather that it is as difficult to fix as straightening a bent rib. In the author's opinion, the ideas of Muhammad Quraish Shihab can serve as a recommendation for understanding hadiths with misogynistic nuances, especially regarding the creation of women from the rib of Prophet Adam. The goal is to minimize bias in understanding and actions towards women.

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