

Modern Exegesis of Dhâllun in Indonesia: A Case Study on Evie Effendi's Controversy

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Abstract: This study discusses the case of the viral video of Evie Effendi's talk show. In his talk show he argued that the prophet Muhammad had been astray. His opinion was based on his understanding of the word 'dhâll' in Sura al-Dhuḥâ verse 7. It is interesting to discuss further how his opinion was reacted by the public. By using descriptive analytical methods, this study answers how the problems occurred and turned out to be a controversy. This study finds that the use of the word 'sesat' as a translation of the word 'dhâll' is not new because the debate on the meaning of 'dhâll' in Sura al-Dhuḥâ verse 7 has occurred since classic period. Another, the study finds that it is understandable if Evie received harsh criticism from the public since the interpretation of the Qur'an requires high requirements to meet before one could interpret it.

1 INTRODUCTION

On August 8, 2018 a viral video was taken of a talk show delivered by Evie Effendi on social media. In his talk show Evie interpreted the word 'dhâll' in the Sura al-Dhuḥâ verse 7 with the meaning of 'sesat'. Based on this meaning, he said that the prophet Muhammad had gone astray. He also stated that commemorating 'maulid' (the Prophet's birthday) was commemorating his error. (M. Alvin Nur Choironi, 2018)

The presence of Evie's video was in the spotlight and received serious reactions from the Muslim community in the social media community. Most of them wanted him to clarify his talk. They also asked him to apologize to Muslims for alleged abuse of the Prophet Muhammad.

On the evening of August 8, Evie Effendi clarified and apologized for his oversight. He claimed misinterpretation and reasoned that he was tired when was giving a preaching. That reason caused him to interpret the word 'dhâll' literally as 'sesat'. In fact, he did not mean to say the prophet Muhammad was misguided. (Choironi, 2018)

In the 9th of August 2018, the video of Evie's clarification was spread fast. His case became a polemic in Muslim communities. Starting from the illusion world, in the 11th of August the case ran into the reality world by reporting Evie to the police. He was reported and accused on insulting religion. In

fact, people claimed his case seriously more than Ahok's case. (Redaksi Mojok, 2018) By that report, the police invited him to confirm. (Jawa Pos, 2018)

The polemic of Evie's talk show on *dhâll* meaning is closed to interpretation studies. Hence, in this study, the researchers were interested to know further the case. In addition, this study also tries to construct an academic construction of the case as an attempt to clarify it.

2 TERMS

The term *tafsir* refers to Quranic studies which means "an explanation of the purpose of the words of God according to human abilities". Tafsir is the result of a truly sincere and repetitive effort from the interpreter to draw and find the meanings of the verse of the Qur'an in accordance with the ability and tendency of the interpreter. (M. Quraish Shihab, 2015)

Sura al-Dhuḥâ is the 93rd of the Qur'an which consists of 11 verses. This Sura is among the Makkiya Sura. The context of the nuzul was as consolation for the Prophet after he did not receive it for a while, and as a rejection over the accusation of the idolaters of Mecca who said that Allah had abandoned His Prophet. (A.A. Dahlan and M. Zakiya Alfarisi, 2000)

The term 'social media' refers to online media where users can easily participate, share and create content including blogs, social networks, wikis, forums and virtual worlds. The term refers to the definition given by Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein. They said that social media is a group of internet-based applications that build on the basis of Web 2.0 ideology and technology and which allows the creation and exchange of *user-generated-content*. (Anang Sugeng Cahyono, 2016)

The term 'ustadz medsos' refers to preachers who preach through social media and are popular among social media users. Usually 'ustadz medsos' has thousands of followers. His da'wah is done online and will switch to face to face when his popularity increases. This popularity can be measured by how many followers, likes, and posts that are shared. (Syahirul Alim, 2017)

3 METHOD

This qualitative research focuses on the reaction over Evie Effendi's viral video case. Its main data depend on Evie Effendi's video talk show and social media users' response to it. Supporting data is taken from several media in the form of news, interpretation articles, or public opinion. All data will be presented descriptive-analytically, in order to describe the case comprehensively. (Lext J. Moleong, 2016)

In this study, the authors divide the study into three stages, borrowing Jujun S. Suriasumantri' scheme of analysis. (Jujun S. Suriasumantri, 1996) The first is ontology which describes data and facts related to the profile of Evie Effendi and the interpretation of the word 'dhâll' in the Sura al-Dhuḥâ verse 7. The second is epistemic which reviews the pattern of Evie's case and aligns it with similar case. The third is axiological which finds solutions to the problem discussed.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Evie Effendi's Profile

Evie Effendi is a preacher who was born in Bandung on January 19, 1976. He has a wife and three children. He routinely hosts the program at "Mutiara Pagi Hits Radio 103.9 FM Bandung". He was also the speaker at "Damai Indonesiaku" on TV One West Java bureau. He also participated as preacher at the program "Islam Itu Indah" on Trans TV. (Muhammad Nurdin, 2017)

Evie had been a thief before preaching. In 2000 when he was 24 years old, he even spent three months in jail for injuring his friend's stomach using a cutter. When he was in prison, he repented and emigrated. (Baban Gandapurnama, 2017)

After leaving prison Evie, who only graduated from junior high school, continued to study religion. He also began to dare to spread Islamic knowledge to his friends. He diligently visited studies and recitation in mosques. He admitted to studying religion and learning Islam independently by reading books and magazines, watching youtube videos, lecturing tapes, then comparing them. He did not learn from one teacher. He claimed his teacher were the Messenger of Allah and his companions. (Anwar Siswadi and Heru Triyono, 2018)

Evie's eccentric fashion style and slang style of speech makes him accepted among teenagers and youth. (Asep Triana and Siddik Sembada Eka Saputra, 2018) By carrying out the 'Hijrah Youth Movement' he is able to embrace young people, criminals, drug addicts and motorcycle gang leaders in Bandung who want to emigrate (*hijrah*). The movement is intensively implemented through social media. (Gandapurnama, 2017)

4.2 Tafsir Dhâll Sura al-Dhuḥâ Verse 7

The following is the result of the search of the authors from several books of classical to contemporary interpretations:

No	Name	Book	Tafsir Dhâll
1	Ibnu 'Abbâs (d. 78 H)	<i>Tanwîr al-Miqbâs min Tafsîr Ibn 'Abbâs</i>	Be among the heretics
2	Al-Ṭabarî (d. 310 H)	<i>Jâmi' al-Bayân fî Ta'wîl al-Qur'ân</i>	Be among the heretics
3	Al-Ṭabrânî (d. 360 H)	<i>Tafsîr al-Qur'ân al-'Azhîm</i>	Negligent (<i>ghaflah</i>) from prophetic matters and shari'a's laws

4	Al-Samarqandî (d. 373 H)	<i>Baḥr al-'Ulûm</i>	Prophetic ignorance, wisdom, holy books and reading, and an invitation to faith
5	Al-Qushairî (d. 465 H)	<i>Laṭâif al-Ishârât</i>	Lost on the hill roads in Mecca
6	Al-Wâhidî (d. 468 H)	<i>Al-Wajîz fî Tafsîr al-Kitâb al-'Azîz</i>	No prophetic instructions, the laws of the Qur'an, and the shari'a
7	Al-Baghawî (d. 510 H)	<i>Ma'âlim al-Tanzîl</i>	Get no divine and prophetic instructions
8	Ibn 'Aṭiyyah (d. 542 H)	<i>Al-Muḥarrar al-Wajîz</i>	Do not know the holy book and faith
9	Al-Râzî (d. 604 H)	<i>Tafsîr al-Fakhr al-Râzî</i>	No meaning infidel
10	Al-Qurṭubî (d. 671 H)	<i>Al-Jâmi' li Ahkâm al-Qur'ân</i>	Negligent (<i>ghaflah</i>) from prophetic matters
11	Al-Nisfî (d. 710 H)	<i>Madârik al-Tanzîl wa Ḥaqâiq al-Ta'wîl</i>	Do not know and understand prophetic instructions and sharia's laws
12	Ibn Kathîr (d. 774 H)	<i>Tafsîr al-Qur'ân al-'Azhîm</i>	Do not know the holy book and faith

13	Abû al-Su'ûd (d. 982 H)	<i>Irshâd al-'Aql al-Salîm ilâ Mazâyâ al-Kitâb al-Karîm</i>	Negligent from the shari'a
14	Al-Shaukânî (d. 1250 H)	<i>Fath al-Qadîr al-Jâmi' baina Fannî al-Riwâyah wa al-Dirâyah min 'Ilm al-Tafsîr</i>	Negligent from prophetic matters
15	Al-Alûsî (d. 1270 H)	<i>Rûḥ al-Ma'ânî</i>	Negligent from the shari'a which cannot be reached by reason
16	Al-Sa'dî (d. 1376 H)	<i>Taisîr al-Karîm al-Raḥmân fî Tafsîr Kalâm al-Mannân</i>	Do not know the holy book and faith
17	Ibn 'Ashûr (d. 1393 H)	<i>Al-Tahrîr wa al-Tanwîr</i>	Confused about the polytheists
18	Wahbah al-Zuhailî	<i>Al-Tafsîr al-Wasîf</i>	Negligent from the laws of the shari'a and confused about the true creed
		<i>Al-Tafsîr al-Munîr fî al-'Aqidah wa al-Sharî'ah wa al-Manhaj</i>	Wrong in knowing the laws of the shari'a

19	Al-Marâghî	<i>Tafsîr al-Marâghî</i>	Negligent from the shari'as and confused with the condition of his people
20	M. Quraish Shihab	<i>Tafsîr al-Mishbâh</i>	Confused

Based on the above interpretations illustrated on the above table, it can be concluded that there are at least five opinions about the meaning of the word 'dhâll'. Those are (1) negligence from prophetic matters and shari'a, (2) not knowing the book and faith, (3) misguided people, (4) confused the case of the polytheists, and (5) lost on the road to Mecca.

The majority of commentators (*mufassir*) chose the first opinion. The second opinion is actually included in the first opinion. The third opinion was represented by two first generation exegetes (Ibn 'Abbâs and al-Thabarî). The modern commentators choose the fourth opinion. The last opinion was adopted by al-Samarqandî. As an exception, Wabwah al-Zuhailî and al-Marâghî gathered the third and fourth opinions.

Meanwhile, al-Râzî did not choose one of those opinions. In his interpretation, he told that there were a few people who interpreted the word 'dhâll' with the meaning 'infidel'. They assumed that at first the Prophet Muhammad was an infidel then Allah gave him His guidance and made him a prophet. Some of the people called al-Râzî are (1) al-Kalbî who stated that Allah found the Prophet Muhammad unbeliever among the heretics then He gave him His guidance to believe Him; (2) al-Siddî which stated that the Prophet used to embrace his people's religion for 40 years; and (3) Mujahid who stated that the Prophet Muhammad was lost from his religious instructions. (Muhammad al-Râzî, 1981)

They based their

"I am then grateful to have migrated. Because every one of us is stupid. There is in the Qur'an sura al-Dhuḥâ *dhâllan fahadâ*. Every person is misguided at first place. *Dhâllan fahadâ*. Muhammad is included. So, if anyone celebrates *maulid*, what does this commemorate? Commemorating Muhammad's error? Ustadz is very brave to say the Prophet was astray? Uh, whose name is still a baby doesn't know anything.

"*Yatîman fa awâ. Wa wajadaka dhâllan fa hadâ*. Ustadz, what is the meaning of *wajadaka dhâllan fa hadâ*?" (asked the host)

"*Wa wajadaka dhâllan fa hadâ*. And when Allah found you in a misguided state, then Allah gave instructions." (the host answered)

"So that is the word of God if Mr. Evie says tonight Muhammad was a heretic. There it is. There is a basis. *Wa wajadaka dhâllan fa hadâ*. So when celebrating *maulid*, what does it commemorate? The problem at that time (Muhammad) was not yet a prophet. Yes, he was just a baby. *Ana basharun mithlukum*. Even in that verse he's still lost and didn't know anything yet. When he already knew everything *fahadâ*, he was given guidance."

There are a lot of responses from social media users on Evie's talk show in viral videos as well as the transcript above. What highlighted their spotlight was the statement that the Prophet went astray when he was born and the commemoration of *maulid* was to commemorate the Prophet's error. So, the author concludes that the context of 'heretical' meant by Evie is the condition of the Prophet Muhammad when he was still a baby and certainly before becoming a prophet. Based on observations, the authors divide their reactions in three groups: (1) the con (blame, ridicule, and scorn), (2) the pro (giving a positive response and defense), and (3) the moderate (giving wise response).

Example of the first group:

@aji_nugraha15: Evie Effendi, you are not clear. Can you just not mention his name. Use the name of the Prophet. Use the designation of the Messenger of Allah. Is he your niece? (450 likes)

Example of the second group:

@bangzar96: There is something strange with people who like to criticize when they see the mistakes of others. We should pray for each other so that we all survive the slander of the world and the hereafter. Not necessarily you are better than the people you sneered and cheated. People like to criticize the clergy with just a mistake. It seems that the person has been looking for a gap to attack for a long time. And when

the gap is opened, attack after attack is launched on the clerics who are slipping with words. This incident did not happen once or two times but repeatedly every time there is a mistake of the words of the clerics...Let our friends pray, may Allah always protects our teachers from slanders, from the mistakes of words and also from distress and catastrophe. Amen. Keep on spirit, O ustadz! Hopefully with this event Alah will elevate your rank. (764 likes)

Example of the third group:

@damar_tea: Apologizing and realizing mistakes are far better than humans who feel themselves the smartest and most understandable. (1974 likes)

@rbayuaji: Remembering the advice of cleric Sofyan Chalid Ruray *hafizhahullâh* regarding the 3 conditions of da'wah: 1. the knowledge of preacher, 2. knowing the audience of da'wah, 3. knowing how to deliver da'wah. So the preacher is heavy. It's really hard. The size is not only to convey goodness but truth. Hopefully this incident will make you learn again before talking on the pulpit. (1145 likes)

In addition to the comments above, comments were also made by several religious figures through their social media accounts. Among them were Nadirsyah Hosen, Abdul Moqsith Ghazali, and Ishomuddin.

On the *Facebook* page, Nadirsyah posted an article entitled "Is It True That The Prophet Muhammad Was Astray Before Becoming A Prophet?" In his writing, Nadirsyah compared Evie's translation with a translation made by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic Indonesia. The Ministry of Religion translation uses the meaning of the word 'dhâll'. According to Nadirsyah, the translation of the word 'dhâll' with the meaning of 'heresy' is very dangerous. To strengthen his argument, Nadirsyah quoted the interpretation of al-Ṭabarî, Sayyid Quṭb, Ibn Kathîr, Mâwardî, and al-Alûsî. He also quoted from other references such as the book of hadith and fiqh. Based on various references he concluded that there were no scholars who said the Prophet was born in a heretical or heretical state before being appointed as a prophet.

Regarding the Evie case, Nadirsyah was very sad because Evie only understood the verse through textual meaning only. At the end of his writing, he wrote, "O, God... Why do the cleric denounce Your

Prophet? Please forgive us all. *Nastaghfirullâh wa natûbu ilaik*. This post has been shared up to 4200 times. (Nadirsyah Hosen, 2018)

Meanwhile, Abdul Moqsith Ghazali through several posts on his *Facebook* page also responded to Evie's case. The first, dated 08 August 2018 at 10:59 a.m., he posted a status entitled 'Ulama Deficit'. Although it does not touch on the interpretation of Sura al-Dhuḥâ, Moqsith implicitly criticizes the phenomenon of the mention of *ulama* which is not in accordance with the understanding of the Qur'an and hadith. According to him, a 'muballigh' or preacher should pay attention to these requirements. The second, at 06:06 p.m., Moqsith posted a status, "The *ulama* is still limping on reading the Qur'an. Not only *makhraj* (proper Koran recitation) which is problematic but there is still a lot of short lengths. But he dares to say, the Prophet was still misguided when he was young." Finally, at 07:13 p.m. Moqsith posted, "A few months ago there was *ulama* who said the prophet's parents went to hell. Now there is *ulama* who say the Prophet was deviant when he was young. *Duh!*" (Abdul Moqsith Ghazali, 2018)

Meanwhile, also through *Facebook* page, Ahmad Ishomuddin cautioned that Muslims learn Islamic knowledge directly from the experts: '*ulamâ, kyai, cleric, teacher, which their chain of knowledge (isnâd) has been popular with the depth of their knowledge and piety. He regretted that some Muslims are easy to give the title 'ustadz' (cleric) to anyone who is smart at religious talk show. This post has been shared around 1800 times. (Ahmad Ishomuddin, 2018)*

Based on the discussion above, it seems very true that the main problem is Evie's authority and capability in conveying an understanding of the Qur'an. As for other problems such as the pros and cons it is the subjectivity of each who responded. But the best is indeed like what is done by scientists who remain elegant in expressing their opinions without including racist or hateful words and giving enlightenment and solutions to clarify the polemic.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Two Main Issues

There are at least two main issues in the Evie case. Those are the use of the word 'sesat' and the authority of Evie Effendi.

Firstly, related to Evie's understanding, if it is observed more closely, actually the word 'sesat'

which is spoken by him still contained several meanings. In the *KBBI*, the word 'sesat' has two meanings: 1. not through the right path; wrong way and 2. wrong right; do indecent things; deviate from the truth (about religion and etc.). (KBBI, 2008) So, the word 'sesat' in Indonesian is the same as the word 'dhâll' in Arabic which has several meanings. It was considered so because the use of the word 'sesat' related to religious meaning that is to 'to deviate from the truth.' It is therefore Evie's statement becomes polemic. However, what must be emphasized here is that Evie did not use the word 'kafir' (infidel) at all as al-Kalbî said.

Secondly, another thing that must also be considered in this case is to classify Evie Effendi's position. He is better known as a social media cleric. He is known as a preacher. Suppose there is an assumption that he is a *ulama*, this assumption is lacking in clarity because he is not famous for his religious scholarship. He is not a *faqîh*, nor is he a *muhaddis* or *mufassir*. Therefore, when viewed from his background, he is classified as preacher. It's just that, as said by Moqsith, Indonesians consider the preacher to have mastered the science of religion in depth so that whatever comes out of them will be considered as truth.

Actually there are some interpretative or translated literatures of the Qur'an that can be used by Evie. For example is *Al-Amin Al-Quran Tarjamah Sunda*, a translation of the Sundanese-language Qur'an. There the word 'dhâll' was meant as 'confused'. (Qamaruddin Shaleh and others, 2003) Evie can also use Mahmud Yunus's translation which interpreted the word 'dhâll' by 'not getting a clue' (Mahmud Yunus, 2002) or the translation of Hasbi ash-Shiddieqy which illustrates 'dhâll' in the sense of 'not knowing the way to go'. (Teungku Muhammad Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy, 2000)

Of course, if a preacher makes a right choice of the intended meaning of the word discussed, the polemic will not occur. Therefore, a preacher at least has a scientific basis for all his words.

5.2 The Phenomenon of 'Ustadz Medsos' and Religious Polemic

Mentioned in a hadith, *Ballighû 'annî wa lau âyatan!* (Hadith narrated by al-Bukhârî) (al-Bukhârî, 1987) Convey from me even though one verse!

The hadith is popular among preachers and is used as legitimacy by them to carry out da'wah. By strong encouragement and talent, some people then competed to practice it. So it's no wonder that then many preachers are popping up. Especially in the era

of social media where communication facilities are more sophisticated and practical, they are present to enliven the social media universe so that it presents a religious nuance in cyberspace. In the end, people who preach through social media are known by social media users as 'ustadz' (religious teachers) who are religious experts.

The presence of 'ustadz' social media in the modern era has turned out to be able to attract the public interest. In addition to the ease of access, the religious teachers are eager to disseminate massive religious teachings on social media. (Nadirisyah Hosen, 2017)

Now religion is one of the staple consumption that is sought after by social media users. This can then be captured by some people as an 'opportunity' to practice the hadith mentioned above. By capitalizing on the ability to use devices and social media as well as the strong desire for da'wah, finally a handful of people plunged into the world of da'wah. Unfortunately, this spirit of da'wah is often not accompanied by qualified scholarship in the field of religion. (Ahmad Zaenuddin, 2017)

Meanwhile, the same conditions were also seen in social media users. In general they cannot filter the content they receive. As a result, the da'wah done by preachers sometimes becomes a blunder to themselves. Even worse than that, it can plunge the audience into unintentional error. (Hosen, 2017)

Evie Effendi is one of the concrete forms of religious phenomena that occurred at this time. In fact, there are still many social media 'ustadz' such as in the world of social media. The number of followers is thousands. It's just that, hopefully similar case don't happen again.

In addition, based on the observations, the messages of da'wah should be delivered without discrimination. (Eko Sumadi, 2016) It's okay to preach the truths that are believed to different people as long as they are polite and wise, not discriminatory, confrontational or even provocative. (Sumadi, 2016)

6 CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, this study finds at least two main problems in the Evie Effendi's cae. The first is the use of the word 'sesat' as the translation of the word 'dhâll'. This is not a new problem because the debate on the meaning of 'dhâll' in Sura al-Dhuḥâ verse 7 has occurred since

classic period when Muslim scholars had debated it. The majority of them agreed that its meaning was not infidel. Regarding the second problem is the authority of Evie Effendi in interpreting the Qur'an. Scientifically, he does not have it. His case is one of the religious phenomena in the millennial era. *Wallâhu a'lam bi al-ṣawâb*.

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