



Suleyman Ates' Interpretation of Reincarnation in the Qur'an (Historical Study of Surah Ash-Shura)

Rahmat Ali Tirmidzi^{1*}, Sutrisno Hadi², Mathias Raihan Narayan Hutautuk³, Irham Jaelani⁴

^{1,2,3,4} Raden Fatah State Islamic University Palembang, Indonesia

Correspondence ✉ rahmatalitirmidzi@gmail.com

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Abstract: Interpretation of the cause of calamity in the Qur'an based on QS Ash-Shura verse 30, focusing on the historical study of Suleyman Ates' thought. Mufasssir scholars interpret Ash-Shura verse 30 with the cause and effect of calamity. However, Suleyman Ates comes with a new context, namely about reincarnation, where the mufasssir scholars do not believe in reincarnation. This research method uses a qualitative approach with content analysis of Suleyman Ates. Suleyman Ates, one of the contemporary interpreters, makes a valuable contribution to this understanding by taking a psychological approach to several verses in his tafsir book. This study will present and analyze an example of his approach in the framework of Surah Ash-Shura.

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INTRODUCTION

In contemporary studies, the topic of *reincarnation* or the cause of calamity has been widely discussed. *Reincarnation* is often an event that raises deep questions about its meaning and cause in human life. In the Islamic tradition, the Qur'an provides guidance and explanations regarding various aspects of life, including calamities. QS Ash-Shura verse 30 states: "*And whatever calamities befall you, they are the result of your own deeds, and Allah forgives most of them.*" This verse emphasizes that the calamities that befall people are often the result of their own actions. The interpretation of this verse has been a subject of discussion among Muslim scholars and intellectuals throughout history. One contemporary scholar who provides an in-depth look at this verse is Suleyman Ates. Suleyman Ates, a Turkish theologian and mufasssir, is known for his historical and contextual approach in interpreting the Qur'an. Suleyman Ates has his own view in interpreting QS Ash-Shura verse 30, which in his view has the meaning of *reincarnation* in it. This approach is important to understand how the concept of *reincarnation* is understood in different historical and cultural contexts.

This study aims to explore Suleyman Ates' interpretation of *reincarnation* in QS Ash-Shura verse 30, focusing on his historical approach. The study will examine how Ates understands the relationship between human actions and *reincarnation*, as well as how his interpretation compares with other classical and modern commentaries. By analyzing Suleyman Ates' views, this study is expected to provide greater insight into the theological and moral dynamics associated with *reincarnation* in Islam (Hussein Yusmani, 2014).

Through a historical approach, Suleyman Ates argues that the soul is elevated to a higher realm after the death of the physical body. Souls burdened with sin will undergo various maturation processes referred to as torments in the realm known as *barzakh*. In his view, souls who die before reaching a certain level of evolution or who have not had sufficient opportunities, may be given

the chance to return to the world in another human body to continue their evolution. This brings us to the issue of reincarnation. The word *reincarnation* refers to the concept of the reincarnation of a dead being. The term is derived from two Latin words: *re* meaning again and *incarnere* meaning in the flesh. Literally, *reincarnation* means returning to the flesh. Geoffrey Parrinder, an expert on world religions, defines *reincarnation* as the belief that a soul or force comes out after death and enters another body. In Sanskrit, *reincarnation* is known as *Punarbhava*, which consists of the words *Punar* meaning again and *Bhava* meaning incarnate. Therefore, *Punarbhava* or *reincarnation* means repeated rebirth or reincarnation (Fatimah Nurhasanah, 2015).

In this study, the author has examined how Suleyman Ates' interpretation of QS. Ash-Shura verse 30 provides an in-depth historical and theological view of the causes of calamity from a Qur'anic perspective. Suleyman Ates presents the argument that *reincarnation* is not merely a divine punishment, but also a corrective mechanism and a warning for humans to return to the right path. Through historical studies, Suleyman Ates shows how historical and social contexts influence the understanding of this verse, while highlighting the relevance of its moral and spiritual message. As such, this interpretation not only enriches our knowledge of Qur'anic exegesis, but also provides practical insights for Muslims in knowing and understanding *reincarnation*.

With the foundation outlined in this introduction, the subsequent study will explore the various dimensions of Suleyman Ates' interpretation, explore its theological and practical implications, and compare it with the interpretations of other scholars. It is hoped that this study can make a meaningful contribution to the disciplines of tafsir and Islamic studies, as well as enrich our understanding of how the sacred text of the Qur'an guides humanity in facing the challenges and trials of life.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interpretation of QS. Ash-Shura Verse 30 According to the Mufasssirs

According to M. Quraish Shihab, quoting Thahir Ibn Ashur, Surah Al-Isra verse 30 reminds us that the disaster they experienced was the result of their disobedience in associating partners with Allah SWT. In verse 30, Allah SWT explains that the calamity that befalls someone is the result of their own actions (Quraish Shihab, 2007).

According to Buya Hamka, this verse is a warning that when calamity comes, do not immediately blame others, let alone blame God. Instead, introspect yourself. Humans often fail to realize their mistakes. When calamity suddenly comes, people become confused and tend to blame others or fate. One of the biggest mistakes is forgetting God, so that the calamity that should be a test to strengthen faith, instead becomes a heavy suffering that is difficult to bear because the soul has no grip.

Therefore, believing in the destiny of good and bad, happiness and danger, joy and misery, profit and loss, is the sixth pillar of faith. Everything that is written must happen. So, if calamity comes, introspect. Sometimes, calamities are brought by Allah through human hands, and we believe that we are innocent. Perhaps we are innocent in the things that others accuse us of. However, if we correct ourselves, perhaps we have wronged God in other ways, such as pride or *riya'* in worship. The calamity may come for us to repent. Our Prophet himself taught us to ask for forgiveness and repent after completing the five daily prayers. In fact, in the prayer itself, we are told to ask for forgiveness while bowing, prostrating, and sitting between two prostrations.

It is true! However, first check, is this calamity a warning from God because we have many sins? Or, do we deserve to feel like His beloved servants that we are being tried by Him? Are we worthy of such high honor? Nevertheless, at the end of the verse God says that He forgives many of our mistakes (Buya Hamka, 2020).

According to Ibn Kathir, this verse shows that all forms of hardship and suffering that befall people are the result of their own sins and mistakes. Allah SWT mentions that He forgives many mistakes, but there are still consequences of human actions that they must face. Ibn Kathir emphasizes that this verse is a reminder for humans to always repent and improve themselves in order to avoid greater calamities (Ibn Kathir, 1992).

Al-Qurtubi in his tafsir states that calamities that befall humans are a form of warning and test from Allah SWT. He explains that calamities can come as a result of sin, but can also be a test to increase one's degree of faith. Al-Qurtubi also emphasizes the importance of patience and self-introspection when facing calamities, as well as always trying to improve themselves and ask for forgiveness from Allah (Al-Qurtubi, 2012).

Syed Abul A'la Maududi, in his tafsir, emphasizes that this verse teaches the principle of cause and effect in human life. According to him, human actions have direct consequences that can be either calamities or hardships. Maududi also states that although Allah forgives many sins, humans should always strive to live according to His teachings in order to avoid calamities that result from their own actions (Syed Abul A'la Maududi, 2016).

The Reincarnation Interpretation of Suleyman Ates

The argument and issue of *reincarnation* is not new. Suleyman Ates interprets Surah Ash-Shura verse 30:

وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فَبِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَيَعْفُو عَنْ كَثِيرٍ

Meaning: "And whatever calamity befalls you is due to the deeds of your own hands, and Allah forgives most (of your faults)".

That the verse means that the distress and torment that befalls innocent people, such as children, is a punishment for their previous lives. This view is debatable. But events that seem like punishments to us are not necessarily punishments for crimes or sins. Allah knows the actions and behavior of every servant and appreciates the trials necessary for the maturation of every soul. Perhaps people who are crippled and disabled from childhood are exalted by their hardships.

According to Suleyman Ates, the evolved soul ascends to a higher realm after the death of the body. Sin-tainted souls will go through various maturing processes called torments in a realm called the isthmus. Will they, and the souls of those who died before reaching the age of evolution or having the opportunity, be given the chance to come to the world in another human body and evolve? This is where the issue of reincarnation arises.

From here Suleyman Ates divides 2 statements which will be explained below:

- a. *Anne Rahmindeki Cenine Rûh Üflenmesi* (Blowing of the Holy Spirit to the Fetus in the Mother's Womb)

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ مَسْعُودٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَهُوَ الصَّادِقُ الْمَصْدُوقُ إِنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ يُجْمَعُ خَلْفُهُ فِي بَطْنِ أُمِّهِ أَرْبَعِينَ يَوْمًا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ فِي ذَلِكَ عِلْقَةً مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ ثُمَّ يَكُونُ فِي ذَلِكَ مُضْغَةً مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ ثُمَّ يُرْسِلُ الْمَلَكُ فَيَنْفُخُ فِيهِ الرُّوحَ وَيُؤَمِّرُ بِأَرْبَعِ كَلِمَاتٍ يَكْتُبُ رِزْقَهُ وَأَجَلَهُ وَعَمَلَهُ وَشَقِيئًا أَوْ سَعِيدًا فَوَالَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُهُ إِنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ لَيَعْمَلُ بِعَمَلِ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ حَتَّى مَا يَكُونُ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَهَا إِلَّا ذِرَاعٌ فَيَسْبِقُ عَلَيْهِ الْكِتَابُ فَيَعْمَلُ بِعَمَلِ أَهْلِ النَّارِ فَيَدْخُلُهَا وَإِنْ أَحَدَكُمْ لَيَعْمَلُ بِعَمَلِ أَهْلِ النَّارِ حَتَّى مَا يَكُونُ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَهَا إِلَّا ذِرَاعٌ فَيَسْبِقُ عَلَيْهِ الْكِتَابُ فَيَعْمَلُ بِعَمَلِ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ فَيَدْخُلُهَا. رواه البخاري ومسلم

Meaning: *Abi Abdurrahman Abdillab bin Mas'ud r.a., He said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), who is a truthful and trustworthy person, told us: "Indeed, each one of you is created in his mother's womb for forty days, then he becomes alaqah (a clot of blood) during that time, then he becomes mudghab (a clot of flesh) during that time, then Allah sends an angel to breathe into him the spirit and records four things that have been determined: his sustenance, his death, his deeds, and his misery or happiness. So by Allah, there is no God but Him, there is a man among you who does deeds of the dwellers of Paradise, so that there is no distance between him and Paradise except a cubit, but the decree (Allah) precedes him, so he does deeds of the people of Hell, so he goes to Hell. There is a man among you who does the deeds of the people of Hell, so that there is no distance between him and Hell except a cubit, but the decree (of Allah) precedes him, so he does the deeds of the people of Paradise, so he*

enters Paradise." (Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim) (Abu Zakariya Yahya ibn Sharaf an-Nawawi ad-Dimasqi, 2007).

In this and similar hadiths it is mentioned that the spirit is breathed into the fetus in the mother's womb, but there is no evidence in the Qur'an that the spirit is breathed into the fetus. Although it is mentioned in the verses of Surah Al-Hijr verse 29 and Surah Shad verse 72 that Allah breathed His own spirit into man, these verses are about the divine spirit being breathed into the first man created, and state that Allah breathed the spirit under His command into man, whom He created from clay. There is no mention of the spirit being breathed into a human being (fetus) that is developing in the mother's womb. Rather it states that man is created with a soul and body in the womb:

وَلَقَدْ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُطْفَةً فِي قَرَارٍ مَّكِينٍ
ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْمُضْغَةَ عِظْمًا فَكَسَوْنَا الْعِظْمَ لَحْمًا ثُمَّ أَنْشَأْنَاهُ خَلْقًا آخَرَ فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ
الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ الْخَلْقِينَ

Meaning: "(13) Then, We made it semen in a firm place (the womb); (14) Then, the semen We made into something hanging (blood). Then, that which hangs down We made into a clot of flesh. Then, a lump of flesh We made into bones. Then, We wrapped the bones in flesh. Then, We made it into another creature. Glory be to Allah, the best of creators."

Allah maintains the order of this universe with angels. In the hadith we quote, the angel who creates the structure of the child in the womb and breathes the human spirit into it may be the force that Allah puts into the womb, the law of reproduction.

A hadith narrated by Muslim better reveals that the angel assigned to the womb is the reproductive power of the fertilized egg: "After the sperm (fertilized egg) has been in the womb for forty or forty-five nights, the angel comes to the sperm and says, 'O God, will it be shaki or sa'id?' It is written whether it will be shaki or sa'id. 'O God, will it be male or female?' It is written whether it will be male or female. The deeds it will do, its work (deeds), its end, and its sustenance are also written. Then the page is folded, nothing is added to it, and nothing is taken away from it."

Breathing the soul into the fetus after it has been in the mother's womb for a certain period of time - I don't know - means giving it human consciousness after its organs are formed. For the fetus acquires the title of human not with the partial consciousness in its cells, but only with this great consciousness, which is the source of understanding itself and its environment. When this consciousness is given, the child begins to recognize himself and act consciously. Along with this awareness, he is also given an ability and capacity (i.e. the writing of his destiny). Because his abilities and destiny are highly dependent on the awareness given to him.

Thus, as stated by Suleyman Ates, it combines scientific and theological perspectives to explain the process of human creation and development from the initial phase of fertilization to the formation of a complete fetus. In the early stages, the soul present in the spermatozoa and ovum is described as having only a basic or cellular consciousness, referred to as the animal soul or vitality. This process continues with the inoculation of the egg and the formation of the organs of the fetus, where at a certain point in development, according to the hadith, the human spirit is breathed out by an angel. This marks an important transformation from the basic cellular consciousness to the more complex human consciousness.

Suleyman Ates also emphasizes that the angelic blowing of the spirit not only gives life, but also integrates a higher consciousness into the fetus. Divine law and angelic forces in the womb play an important role in providing this human consciousness. This view shows the harmony between biological and spiritual processes, and confirms that human life involves divine intervention at some stage in fetal development. The text also provides ethical and theological insights into the importance of valuing life from its earliest stages of development, in accordance with Islamic religious beliefs.

b. *Ālem-i Ervāb* (Spirit World)

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَى شَهِدْنَا أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ
الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَرِيلِينَ ١٧٢٢

Meaning: "(Remember) when your Lord brought forth from the backbone of the children of Adam their offspring and Allah took testimony against themselves (saying), "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes (You are our Lord), we bear witness." (We did this) so that on the Day of Resurrection you may say, "We were careless about this."

In the 172nd verse of Surah Al-A'raf, commentators give explanations that have nothing to do with the spirit of the verse: According to some, this verse states that before coming to the world, man testified that Allah is his Lord (when in the spirit world). From this interpretation, the term *Elest Bezmi* or *Elestu birabbikum* was born. Therefore, God created the soul before the body. The soul exists in its own world without entering this body. When they were in this world, God said to them: "Am I not your Lord?" it said. They replied, "Yes, You are our Lord." They answered: The verse tells the story of the testimony situation in the spirit world.

There is no reference to the spirit world in the verse under discussion. As just stated, there is no statement in the Qur'an saying that the human soul was created before the body. Rather, from Qur'anic statements it can be understood that the human soul and body were created together. However, the fact that the soul lives on after the body and will experience reincarnation is emphasized in many Qur'anic verses.

The direct meaning of the expression *ba'th* (reincarnation) in the Qur'an is the resurrection of man in the hereafter. However, from some verses it can also be understood that this *ba's* means that the soul separated from its body will be brought to the world in a new body. If this is the meaning of the verses, then the commentators' explanation of the spirit world may be correct. However, the spirit world is the world of the isthmus created by the soul leaving the body. There is not the slightest hint in the verse to suggest that there was a spirit world before this body was created and that Allah made the spirits of people there testify that He is their Lord.

The verse states that the generation of human beings is taken from their ancestors; it explains that human beings from the seed are given the feeling of knowing God, accepting and recognizing the existence and oneness of God with feelings and intuitions that come from their creation. Every person has a belief in God. This belief is not an acquired feeling, but a feeling that comes from creation.

(قال النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم (كل مولود يولد على الفطرة فأبواه يهودانه أو ينصرانه أو يمجسانه

It means: "Every child is born in a state of *fitrah* (Islam), then it is his parents who make him a Jew, Christian or Magi". (HR. al-Bukhari & Muslim).

The Hadith also shows that beliefs exist in human beings from the moment of creation. The belief that the spirit was created before the body is not based on solid scriptural evidence. If the traditions stating that the spirit is breathed into the fetus in the womb are authentic, and if the human spirit is breathed into it in a literal sense rather than in a figurative sense such as consciousness being breathed into it, then this indicates that the spirit already existed before the body. That is, the spirit is blown into the fetus in the womb by an angel. In the classical sense, there is no spirit world before the body; the spirit world is the world of the soul separate from the body. This means that the spirit that is breathed into the fetus is the spirit of a human being who has left his body and gone to the spirit world. *Ba'th* in this context is the embodiment of the soul in another body.

The explanation of the spirit and the creation of humans in the 172nd verse of Surah Al-A'raf is often associated with the concept of the spirit world before the body is created. Some commentators state that humans testify that Allah is their Lord before they come into the world, but the Qur'an mostly indicates that the human soul and body are created together and live on after

the body dies, emphasizing the resurrection (*ba'th*) in the afterlife. Reincarnation in this context means that the soul separated from its body will reappear in a new body in this world or in the hereafter.

Furthermore, the concept of *ba'th* in the Qur'an usually refers to the resurrection of human beings in the afterlife. However, some interpretations extend its meaning to include the embodiment of the soul in another body in the world. The text criticizes the understanding of the spirit world existing before the body, pointing out that there is no sign in the verse to support the creation of the spirit before the body. On the contrary, human beings have had the nature to recognize and acknowledge God since they were seeds. This belief in God comes from creation and not from acquired experience. This emphasis provides a strong perspective that the spirit blown into the fetus by the angel is a process that confirms the unity of the creation of the soul and body.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examines Suleyman Ates' interpretation of QS Ash-Shura verse 30, focusing on the historical and contextual approaches he uses to understand the relationship between human actions and the concept of *reincarnation*. Suleyman Ates, argues that the verse not only emphasizes that calamities are the result of man's own actions, but also hints at *reincarnation*. According to Suleyman Ates, the human soul is elevated to a higher realm after physical death and may be given the opportunity to return to the world in a new body to continue its spiritual evolution. This view enriches the discussion on *reincarnation* in Islam by incorporating broader theological and moral aspects, as well as offering new perspectives relevant to historical and cultural contexts. Through historical analysis, Suleyman Ates shows how the social and historical context influences the understanding of this verse, highlighting the relevance of its moral and spiritual message. By considering *reincarnation* not merely as a *divine* punishment but also as a warning, Suleyman Ates asserts that this concept can help humans return to the right path. This interpretation not only enriches our knowledge of Qur'anic exegesis but also provides practical insights for Muslims in dealing with life's calamities and challenges as part of their spiritual journey. This research is expected to make a meaningful contribution to the disciplines of tafsir and Islamic studies, expanding the understanding of how the sacred text of the Qur'an guides humans in living life.

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