

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF LEADERSHIP AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE IN SURAH THAHA

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ABSTRACT

This study of Surah Thaha will focus on the rhetorical analysis of its verses on roles of a person in becoming a leader among his family, peer group, society and governance. Vis-a-vis, it is also influenced by the support and roles played by other members in his surroundings. It will emphasis the symmetrical arrangement of Surah Thaha, which contributes, to the understanding that this Quranic chapter is rhetorically addressing the causes and consequences of becoming a leader. In the end, the study will suggest *'Aqidah* and *Tarbiyyah* as the major and ongoing fundamentals of leadership acquired from this Surah.

Keywords: *leadership, Quranic communicative approaches, Quranic symmetry*

Quranic thematic studies have become popular among researchers of language and literature. Some of these studies are focusing on the structural and symmetrical arrangements of the Quran. They provide new findings with additional approaches into the Quranic stylistic. These studies are considered contemporary academic interests, having said that, some scholars in the past had the same reckoned styles too. The study of *al-nazm* or coherence and *al-i'jaz* or inimitability principles were the subject matters to the prominent scholars of *Al-Balaghah* such as Abd Al-Qahir Al-Jurjani, Al-Khitabi, Al-Rumani, Al-Baqilani, Al-Suyuti and Al-Zamakhsyariy¹. In our recent day, these researches become influential topics of the Quran among academicians and also laymen. As a result, the interest of understanding the Quran becomes phenomenal to them².

¹ Berhanuddin, Qaziah Fatimah (2010). *Dilalat Al-Tashbeehat Al-Quraniyyah Bina an 'ala Anwaa' Al-Mushabbah Bih: Dirasah Tahliliyyah* (Master dissertation). 46-48

² Ibid: 78

Rhetorical analysis is regarded the core principle of Quranic analytical studies in every chapter. The depth of meaning, sometimes direct and indirect, brings more curiosities and intellectual discussions upon thematic researches in the Quran. For example, in the shade of symmetrical study of the Quran, Raymond K. Farrin, an academician at American University of Kuwait has been investigating this theme in several *Surah* in the Quran. In an article entitled “Surat al-Baqara: A Structural Analysis” (2010)³, Farrin suggested nine sections which may come in several form of rings as minor constituents or subsections. He earlier analyzed the relationships between several researches as ‘have elements in common.’ He put the idea of the central verse of Surah Al-Baqarah, which recorded in the verse 143 from the Surah that Muslims are the new median community (*ummah wasatan*). Coherently, the two “median” met and become the point of symmetry. The synchronization between rhetorical and symmetrical aspects will give bigger and higher impression to the people and enable them to understand the Quran in a better, wider manner.

In Surah Thaha, the compositions arranged are basically referred to the rhetorical aspect where we can see the structural soundness of its verses. As a conclusion, leadership development appears as the biggest lesson from this Surah. In this study, the process of leadership requires four important elements. It starts with *‘aqidah* (Islamic creed), *tarbiyyah* (education and training), *da’wah* (preaching and practicing), and is sustained

³ Raymond K. Farrin (2010). Surat al-Baqara: A Structural Analysis. The Muslim World Journal, 100(1), 17-32. Doi: 10.1111/j.1478-1913.2009.01299.x

by *istiqamah* (consistency). Below are the structural analysis and ongoing process of the fundamentals of leadership dig out from Surah Thaha:

| Fundamental | Verses |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>‘Aqidah</i> | verse 1 - 8 and 100 - 114 |
| <i>Tarbiyyah</i> | verse 9 - 40 and 115 - 123 |
| <i>Da’wah</i> | verse 41 - 99 |
| <i>Istiqamah</i> | verse 124 - 135 |

Timetable 1: the fundamentals of leadership in Surah Thaha

These elements, likewise, understood not only from the structural or technical arrangement of its verses. At the very beginning, to have analysis of that fragment, we must first look into the meaning and linguistic usage. This Surah contains 135 verses which have the story of Musa *‘alayhi assalam* as the major story where we can learn how he had faced with trials and challenges from his surroundings. Meanwhile, not only to have analyzed these difficulties, our mind set must have learnt that the levels of every difficulty were meant to build special ability in Musa *‘alayhi assalam*’s self. Besides, Allah mentioned another story of His prophet, Adam *‘alayhi assalam*, as a lesson of knowing true enemy to the human being; Iblees and devils.

Meanwhile, to complete the circle of leadership development derived from this 20th chapter of the Quran, Allah had prepared significant stages of social influences which are orderly interrelated. There are four categories of social influences can be categorized from this Surah and they are family, society, allies or

companions and divinity. Three of them; family, society and allies are considered visible, while divinity is invisible in the context of humanity, whereas it creates extraordinary impact in one's faith and religious viewpoint. Hence, divinity is in fact the strongest social influence which can personalize a great leader.

The divinity and *'aqidah* have together made the opening verses of this Surah. Before getting into the story of Musa *'alayhi assalam*, Allah directed his words to the Prophet Muhammad *sallallahu 'alayhi wassalam* in the verse 2 when He said, "We have not sent down to you the Qur'an that you be distressed." As a matter of fact, this shows the seriousness of the stories that will be mentioned afterwards in this Surah. The weightiness of leadership development in this Surah is compact according to the main story of Musa *'alayhi assalam*. He had passed three stages of leadership development as early as leaving his family alone to get aid or guidance from a fire he had perceived. At this point, the action of Musa *'alayhi assalam* taught a lesson of being a responsible leader in which he neither asked other family members to go nor accompany him there.

The earlier eight verses of this Surah is a raw *'aqidah* section. The verse 9 comes in as the opening verse of *tarbiyyah* section. The specialty of both sections is the existence of Prophet Muhammad *sallallahu 'alayhi wassalam* as the second person who was spoken directly. In the beginning of *tarbiyyah* section, Allah mentioned the 'conversation' with the Prophet, "And has the story of Musa reached you?" before continuing the story of Musa *'alayhi assalam* without the existence of him in total. Stylistically, it shows that the message behind this story is imperative and vigorous.

In addition, Allah again highlighted the essence of *'aqidah* in the verse 14 to 16 when He said to Musa *'alayhi assalam* immediately after choosing him as His messenger, "Indeed, I am Allah, there is no deity except Me so worship Me and establish prayer for My remembrance. Indeed, the Hour is coming - I almost conceal it - so that every soul may be recompensed according to that for which it strives. So do not let one avert you from it who does not believe in it and follows his desire, for you (then) would perish." At this section, Allah had sparked the element of *'aqidah* which included His oneness and the faith in the end of the world as an innate value in a believer leader. Besides, it will bring sincerity and spiritual support into himself exclusively.

On the other hand, it was not only the internal factor absorbed in a leader, but also the external factor. Therefore, the *tarbiyyah* section is not merely to educate, but also to train a person to put theories into action. At this section, we learn that Allah had trained Musa *'alayhi assalam* with miracles. Right after that, He commanded Musa *'alayhi assalam* to go to Firaun and preach him into Islam. The third section is called *da'wah* which concentrates on two objectives: preaching and practicing. Allah had exposed hardships in which Musa *'alayhi assalam* faced while doing *da'wah* to Firaun and the people whom came from different backgrounds. They were the sorceresses, the children of Israel, the Egyptian ministers, and a Sumerian man which called Samiri in the Quran. In the middle of the story in this section, mistakes as human being occurred from Musa *'alayhi assalam*. In his mind, Musa *'alayhi assalam* had left his people and hastened to Allah in order to seek His pleasure, without he knew that Samiri had led his people astray. He came back to the

people in angry. As a trained leader, he could see the root of the problem and take charge of it so he expelled Samiri from his people. In the verse 86, Musa *'alayhi assalam* made an upright solution for this difficult time by reminding his people of the basic teaching that they were following and did not take any harsh action towards them. Allah said, "So Moses returned to his people, angry and grieved. He said, "O my people, did your Lord not make you a good promise? Then, was the time (of its fulfillment) too long for you, or did you wish that wrath from your Lord descend upon you, so you broke your promise (of obedience) to me?" In the continuous verses, before making the final decision Musa *'alayhi assalam* was recorded to have asked his people, his brother Harun *'alayhi assalam*, and also Samiri about the causes and consequences of this matter justly. It emphasizes the role of a trained leader in Musa *'alayhi assalam*.

The first three sections are combined in a process where the whole story of Musa *'alayhi assalam* was mentioned and it covers almost 75% of the Surah. Furthermore, the characteristics of a leader are significant in the personality of Musa *'alayhi assalam*. This is the first phase of the process where we can see the strength and stress are mixed accordingly in a story. Unlike this phase, the second and third phases are coherently different in terms of the contents as they are not telling the same story, yet represent more process that is thoughtful. In the second phase, the combination is between two ongoing fundamentals, *'aqidah* and *tarbiyyah* only. These two fundamentals are meant to nurture the leadership development in one's self. Nonetheless, the *'aqidah* section is silencing the presence of lordship. Rather, it is now talking about the end of the world and the Day of Judgment. It

rejuvenates the meaning of being a believer leader who might have struggled to achieve the mission and vision in his life. The turning point that a person can apply at this period of his or her achievement is mentioned in the verse 114, when Allah said: "So high (above all) is Allah, the Sovereign, the Truth. And, (O Muhammad), do not hasten with (recitation of) the Qur'an before its revelation is completed to you, and say, "My Lord, increase me in knowledge."

We learn the beauty of Islam. It is knowledge which becomes the brain of this religion. True Muslim leaders need to have knowledge as much as they can. In the middle of the maturity ages when a man has become leader, he might ignore to seeking knowledge. But Allah reminds the Muslims in a wise way. This verse refers to the command from Allah to Prophet Muhammad Muhammad *sallallahu 'alayhi wassalam* to pray that Allah increases him in knowledge. So, in accordance to obtain more knowledge, Allah Himself teaches a special prayer for the mankind to ask Him with.

In addition, the *tarbiyyah* section in this second phase brings a refreshing story of Adam *'alayhi assalam* and his wife in the Heaven. Allah taught them eventually about their enemy, Iblees. The lesson is practical. Adam, as a human being, would not know the real character of anybody unless he deals with them. Commonly, it is not enough for a man to learn only by listening to some tips or advice. Therefore, Allah trained him with Iblees's trap. He deployed this event as a reason to send Adam *'alayhi assalam* to the earth as His *khalifah* (successor) with the biggest lesson learned that Iblees is Adam's true enemy until to the Day of Resurrection.

The final phase identifies only a section, *istiqamah*. It is the maintenance of this process. To remain being a leader, a person has to be consistent in his action and knowledge. The opening verse of this phase is the verse 124, Allah mentioned: “And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed life, and We will gather him on the Day of Resurrection blind.” This verse relates to the last verse from the previous phase in the section *tarbiyyah* when Allah ordered Adam *‘alayhi assalam* and his offspring to descend and inhabit the earth. Allah said in the verse 123: “Descend from Paradise - all, (your descendants) being enemies to one another and if there should come to you guidance from Me - then whoever follows My guidance will neither go astray (in the world) nor suffer (in the Hereafter).” The consistency is emphasized in both verses even though in reference to the meaning, both are separated in each respective section. This is also known as Quranic structural style. We may find that most of the longer Surahs in the Quran have collective themes and stories in a particular chapter. This is because the way the Quran speaks is aimed to cherish the *‘aqidah* of the oneness of Allah and encourage Muslims to do good deeds⁴. The consistency in this last section is soundly derived from the verse 130, when Allah reminded: “So be patient over what they say and exalt (Allah) with praise of your Lord before the rising of the sun and before its setting; and during periods of the night (exalt Him) and at the ends of the day, that you may be satisfied.” Allah again has taught Muslims the spiritual strength that they need to remain on consistency. Patience is another wisdom in

⁴ Bakri S. Amin (2004). *Al-Ta’bir Al-Fanni Fie Al-Quran Al-Karim*. Lebanon: Dar Al-‘Ilm Lil Malayeen, page 216-217

Islam which can enhance internal process to become a successful leader.

Towards the end of this Surah in this section, Allah reminds the essential of prayer and to command the family members to perform the obligated prayers and that one should be patient in doing it. This reminder is similar with the command of Allah to Musa *‘alayhi assalam* to perform prayer as the remembrance of Allah. This Surah ends with the verse that mentions about the situation of mankind in the Hereafter according to what they have obtained in the worldly life. As Allah said: “Say, “each (of us) is waiting; so wait for you will know who are the companions of the sound path and who is guided.”

To conclude, below are some of the examples of the verses related to the social influences, stories and fundamentals:

| Group | Verses | Story | Fundamental |
|--------|--|-------|------------------|
| Family | 10. “When he saw a fire and said to his family, “Stay here; indeed, I have perceived a fire; perhaps I can bring you a torch or find at the fire some guidance.” | Musa | <i>Tarbiyyah</i> |
| | 40. “(And We favored you) when your sister went and said, 'Shall I direct you to | Musa | <i>Tarbiyyah</i> |

| | | | |
|---------|---|-------------------------|------------------|
| | someone who will be responsible for him?' So We restored you to your mother that she might be content and not grieve.” | | |
| | 132. And enjoin prayer upon your family [and people] and be steadfast therein. We ask you not for provision; We provide for you, and the [best] outcome is for (those of) righteousness.” | General / Muslim family | <i>Istiqamah</i> |
| Society | 24. “Go to Pharaoh. Indeed, he has transgressed .” | Musa | <i>Tarbiyyah</i> |
| | 57-58. “He said, "Have you come to us to drive us out of our land with your magic, O Moses? Then we will surely | Musa | <i>Da'wah</i> |

| | | | |
|--------|--|------|------------------|
| | bring you magic like it, so make between us and you an appointment , which we will not fail to keep and neither will you, in a place assigned.” | | |
| Allies | 29-32. “And appoint for me a minister from my family - Aaron, my brother. Increase through him my strength. And let him share my task.” | Musa | <i>Tarbiyyah</i> |
| | 90. “And Aaron had already told them before (the return of Moses), "O my people, you are only being tested by it, and indeed, your Lord is the Most Merciful, so follow me and obey my order.” | Musa | <i>Da'wah</i> |

| | | | |
|----------|---|------|------------------|
| Divinity | 13. “And I have chosen you, so listen to what is revealed (to you).” | Musa | <i>Tarbiyyah</i> |
| | 117. “So We said, "O Adam, indeed this is an enemy to you and to your wife, then let him not remove you from Paradise so you would suffer.” | Adam | <i>Tarbiyyah</i> |

Picture 1: the process of leadership development in Surah Thaha

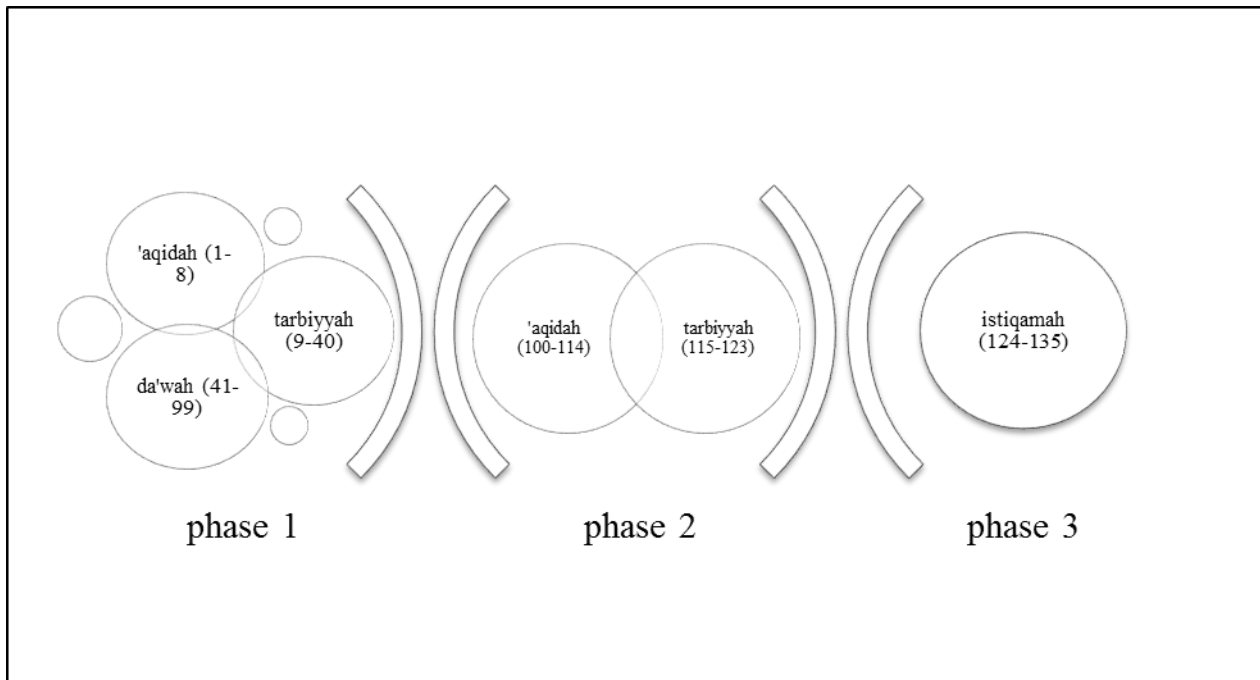
According to the process, *istiqamah* becomes an individual section in the last phase for its solidity after passing two important phases. Even though it is alone, it has deeper effect in understanding structural analysis of leadership and the social influences brought in this Surah, both in development and challenges. On the other hand, *'aqidah* dan *tarbiyyah* are two major and ongoing fundamentals that a man has to have in enhancing his leadership development.

The conclusion of the structure with the additional values of knowledge and patience is shown below:

Timetable 2: examples of the Quranic verses on the social influences in Surah Thaha

The process of leadership development through three phases can be

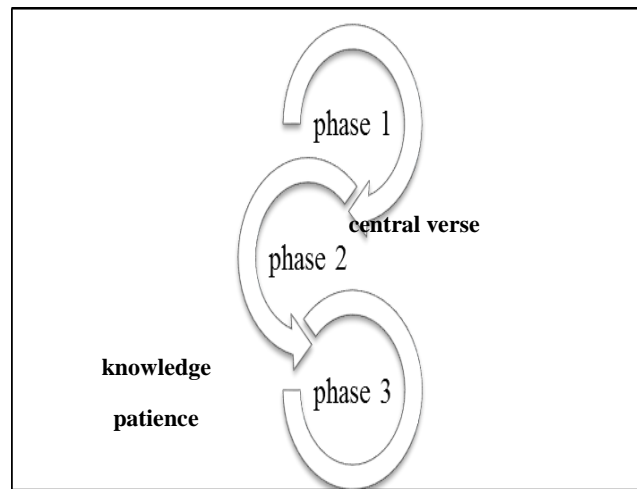
Verse 1-8: *'aqidah*



seen below:

Verse 9-40:
tarbiyyah
 Verse
 41-99: *da'wah*
 Central verse: 68
 Verse 100-114:
'aqidah -----*knowledge*
 Verse 115-
 123: *tarbiyyah*
 Verse
 124-135:
istiqamah --
 ---*patience*

section where the most important part of practice takes place. It is a conformation of confidence and divine support from Allah for Musa *'alayhi assalam* after being trained through *'aqidah* and *tarbiyyah* sections.



Picture 2: correlation between the phases to complete the process

From symmetrical analysis point view, Surah Thaha seems to have no axis of facing sections. However, the symmetry looks like two rings of composition that create a spiral structure which can work together in a time. One of the rings can operate without another one but with the existence of both, the progression will be speedy and comprehensive. The central verse in this Surah is the verse 68, as Allah mentioned: Allah said, "Fear not. Indeed, it is you who are superior." This verse appeared in *da'wah*

Reference:

Bakri S. Amin (2004). *Al-Ta'bir Al-Fanni Fie Al-Quran Al-Karim*. Lebanon: Dar Al-'Ilm Lil Malayeen, page 216-217

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Raymond K. Farrin (2010). Surat al-Baqara: A Structural Analysis. The Muslim World Journal, *100(1)*, 17-32. Doi: 10.1111/j.1478-1913.2009.01299.x

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