LAYSA KAMITHLIHI SHAY’UN: THE INTERPRETATION OF MUTASHĀBIHĀT VERSES AND TRADITIONS BY ‘ABD AL-QADIR WANGAH IN RISĀLAḤ MANHAJ AHL AL-SUNNAH


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Abstract

Among many issues discussed and debated in the field of Islamic theology is the interpretation of the mutashābihāt verses and traditions. Tuan Guru `Abd Al-Qadir Wangah, or known as Ayah Dir Sekam, was among the many Malay Muslim scholars who analysed, described and contributed to the proper understanding of mutashābihāt in the Islamic studies. This study aims at analyzing Ayah Dir’s discussion on the interpretation of the mutashābihāt from his writing, namely Risālah Manhaj Ahl al-Sunnah. Textual analysis methodology is applied on this ‘Risālah’ to thematize and organize his main ideas in providing the correct methodology in understanding the mutashābihāt verses and traditions. Findings show that Ayah Dir Sekam’s methodology of interpretation, namely ta’wīl ijmālī and tafsīlī, is in line with the methodology of classical and modern scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā‘ah, which is
regarded as the mainstream of Islam. This is due to his strong link with the significant turāth (heritage) and mu tabar (credible) writings by these scholars. In the same way, this is also due to his firm educational experience with many well-known Malay Muslim scholars either in the Malay Archipelago or in Mecca.

**Keywords:** ʿAbd al-Qadir Wangah; mutashābihāt; taʿwīl; Risālah Manhaj Ahl al-Sunnah; Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah.

**Khulasah**

Kata kunci: ‘Abd al-Qadir Wangah; mutashābihāt; ta’wīl; Risālah Manhaj Ahl al-Sunnah; Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā’ah.

Understanding Religious Sources In Islam

Islam is a religion of knowledge. This is acknowledged by Franz Rosenthal (1914-2003), a great American orientalist. In other words, all teachings of Islam are based on knowledge. In Islam, knowledge is not myth, fiction, and hearsay. For that reason al-Rāghib al-Asfahānī (d. 502H/1108CE) defined knowledge as: “al-’Ilm Idrāk al-Shay’ bi Ḥaqīqatih”, which means knowing things in its true nature. Therefore, with the purpose of understanding truth or understanding things of their true nature, the religious sources for Islam are naqli (revealed) and ‘aqli (reason) knowledge. Both kinds of knowledge are of paramount importance in many aspects of Islamic studies, such as theology, law, Sufism, principles of Islamic law (uṣūl al-Fiqh), Quranic studies, hadith studies, history and the lists goes on.

In Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn, al-Ghazālī (450-505H) says about integrating these naqli and ‘aqli knowledge:

فالداعي إلى محض التقليد مع عزل العقل بالكلية جاهل والمكتفي بمجرد العقل عن أنوار القرآن والسنة مغرور فإياك أن تكون من أحد الفريقين وكن جامعاً بين الأصلين فإن العلوم العقلية كالأدغذية والعلوم الشرعية بالأدوية والشخص المريض يستضر بالغذاء متى فاته الدواء فكذلذك أمراض القلوب لا يمكن علاجها إلا

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3 Al-Ghazālī, Marvels of the Heart (Kentucky: Fons Vitae, 2010), 48.
بالأدوية المستفادة من الشريعة وهي وظائف العبادات والأعمال التي ركزها الأنبياء صلوات الله عليهم لإصلاح القلوب فمن لا يداوي قلبه المريض بمعالجات العبادة الشرعية واكتفى بالعلوم العقلية استضر بما يستضر المريض بالغذاء وظن من يظن أن العلوم العقلية مناقضة للعلوم الشرعية وأن الجمع بينهما غير ممكن هو ظن صادر عن عمي في عين البصيرة نعوذ بالله منه...۴

Which means: “...So he who is a proponent of mere blind imitation and of setting aside the intellect entirely is ignorant; and he who is satisfied with the intellect alone, without the light of the Qur’an and the Sunnah, is deluded. Take care that you be not in either of these two groups but be one who unites the two sources. For the intellectual sciences are like foods, and the sciences of religious law are as medicines. The sick person is harmed by food whenever he neglects the medicine. Thus, the diseases of the heart can be treated only by the medicines derived from the religious law (Sharī‘ah), which are the offices of the rites of worship and the works set by the prophets, on who be the blessings of God, for the reformation of hearts. So, he who does not treat his sick heart by the use of ritual worship, but is content to use the intellectual sciences alone, is harmed thereby, even as the sick man is harmed by food. The supposition of those who think that the intellectual sciences are opposed to the

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sciences of religious law and that it is impossible to bring them together in harmony, is a supposition that arises from blindness in the eye of insight. We take refuge in God from it.”

This same stand is also taken by modern renowned Muslim scholars, like the late Nūḥ ‘Alī Salman al-Quḍāh. A similitude is made between both naqli and ‘aqli knowledge with the sun and the eyes. The sun is of no use to a man who is a blind. The same also goes to a man who still cannot see without the light from the sun. Therefore, both are important to guide in understanding not only of this world, but also of religious teachings, for after-life.

However, to understand the naqli knowledge or sources is not like reading any simple book. For there are rules and conditions that must be fulfilled to work on the proper and correct meanings of these divine sources. If not, man will only misinterpret or be deluded by his own whims in understanding the meanings and objectives of the religious sources. The Prophet PBUH says:

من قال في القرآن بيأيه، فليتَبَّأَ مَعْبُودًا مِنَ النَّارِ

“Whosoever interprets the Quran by his own (deluded) mind, he will in the hereafter be placed in the hell.”

The same also goes to the Sunnah. The problem with the ignorant is that they wrongly interpret and understand the Sunnah, which do not only harm their actions but also their faiths. Both reputable Muslim scholars, namely the late Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (1917-1996) and Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (b. 1926) prepared their books to overcome this matter, entitled: *al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah Bayn Ahl al-

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The Qur’an and Sunnah were both revealed in the Arabic language, within the context of Arab culture (wāqi‘). Therein, higher Godly reasons (asbāb), divine objectives (maqāṣid) and the fundamentals (uṣūl), branches (furū‘) and methodologies (qawā‘id) to understand them.\(^7\) In other words, to understand the Qur’an and the Sunnah is not something easy, or for anyone to do. This sense of importance and urgency is obvious in the discipline of Islamic faith, especially when dealing with the mutashābihāt verses.

In the Qur’an itself, Allah SWT recorded the wrong and deviated approach taken by the people in understanding the mutashābihāt. Among these people are the mushabbihah (one who similarizes the essence, attributes and actions of God with His creations), refuters of Allah’s attributes (mu‘attilah), and the anthropomorphist (mujassimah).\(^8\) Allah SWT says:

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هُوَ الَّذيي أَنَّلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكيتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مَّحْكُومَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكيتَابي وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابهيَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذيينَ فيي قُلُوبهُمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبيعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفيتَةَي وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْويليهِ وَمَا
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Considering the above discussion, this article describes and analyses the contribution of ‘Abd al-Qadir Wangah, by using textual analysis methodology on *Risālah Manhaj Ahl Sunnah*. There are four subtopics: the biography of ‘Abd al-Qadir Wangah, introduction to *Risālah Manhaj Ahl Sunnah*, ta’wil methodology of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā’ah in *Risālah Manhaj Ahl al-Sunnah*, and lastly, the conclusion.

**Biography of ‘Abd al-Qadir Wangah**

According to Ahmad Fathi al-Fatani, Abdul Qadir’s full name is Haji Abdul Qadir bin Haji Wangah bin Abdul Latif bin Othman. He was popularly known by his villagers, friends and students as ‘Ayah Dir Sekam.’ His short name, ‘Dir,’ was ascribed to the name of his birth

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village, Kampung Sekam, Patani in the year 1937. Nevertheless, according to other source, Ayah Dir Sekam was born in the year 1921AD or 1340H and died on Thursday, 18 Rabiul Awwal 1412 or 26 September 1991.\(^\text{10}\)

Ayah Dir’s early education began at Pondok Balur, which is located not far from his village. He learned many Islamic disciplines under the supervision of Haji Ahmad bin Muhammad Darawi, who was also known as Tok Balur. After spending 4 years at Pondok Balur, he went to learn with Haji Ahmad Kubang Pasir, Binjai Lima. However, after two years of learning, Haji Ahmad Kubang Pasir died, which caused Ayah Dir to continue his learning at Pondok Perigi. At this new traditional religious institution, he learned with Tuan Guru Haji Ahmad bin Abd al-Wahhab al-Fusani, who was a renowned Muslim scholar of \textit{Uṣūl al-Dīn} (theology), \textit{Qirāʾāt} (Quranic readings) and \textit{falak} (astronomy) in Pattani during those days.

In the year 1949, Ayah Dir migrated to Kelantan and continued his learning with a few Malaysian Muslim scholars, namely Tuan Guru Haji Abdullah Tahir Bunut Payong, Haji Muhammad Nur Ibrahim Penambang (the Mufti of Kelantan State), and Haji Ali Solahuddin Pulau Pisang at Masjid Muhammadi in Kota Bharu.\(^\text{11}\) This migration to Malaysia enriched Ayah Dir’s knowledge and experience with the Muslim scholars in the Malay Archipelago and with the religious issues discussed in Malaysia.

One of the unique characteristics of Islamic scholarship in the 19th and 20th century was the strategic educational platform of the Two Holy Places Mecca and Medina. Due to that, like any other Muslim scholars of his


\(^{11}\) \textit{Ibid.}
days, in 1951, Ayah Dir went to Mecca to continue his studies there. He spent his fruitful five years in Mecca to learn from many renowned Muslim scholars, especially with Sheikh Wan Ismail bin Wan Abd al-Qadir al-Fatani, who was popularly known as Pak Da Eil (1882AD – 1965AD). He learned from Pak Da Eil various Islamic disciplines, which include *Uṣūl al-Dīn* (theology), *nahw* (Arabic grammar), *ṣarf* (Arabic morphology), *balāghah* (Arabic rhetoric) and *manṭiq* (logic). Most of the time, he went to learn with small circle of studies, rather than the bigger ones, to acquire more focus in learning from majority Muslim teachers and scholars in Mecca.

The discussion on the biography of Ayah Dir Sekam is not complete without mentioning of Ayah Dir Sekam’s main intellectual contributions. These contributions can be divided into two main forms; in *da’wah* (Islamic propagation) activities and Islamic writings. In *da’wah* activities, Ayah Dir was known as among renowned Muslim scholars who were actively involved in *da’wah* through classes and advices between the years 1957-1991. As remarked by Masakaree Ardae, right after Ayah Dir arrived from Mecca, he opened his own Islamic *pondok* (traditional school), namely *al-Ma’had al-Islāmī*, which is located at Wakaf Budi or also known as Selabudi, Sekam District in Pattani. This school was attended by thousands of students, whereby among them are today’s great Pattani Muslim scholars such as Tuan Guru Abdul Rahman Pauh Manis, Rakak (the author of *Kitāb Khulāṣah al-Tawḥīd*), Tuan Guru Haji Ismail Sepanjang, Tuan Guru Abdul Aziz Ismail (popularly known as Baba Aziz), Baba Ghazali Ahmad (the present principal of Pondok Sekam) and Baba

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12 Masakaree Ardae, Senior Lecturer of Islamic Studies at Universiti Sultan Azlan Shah, Interview on the *Risālah Manhaj Ahl Sunnah*, Biography and the Contribution of Ayah Dir Sekam, Universiti Sultan Azlan Shah (USAS), December 3, 2018.
Muhammad Beruas (popularly known as Anak Harimau Ayah Dir Sekam).\textsuperscript{13}

In terms of Islamic writings, Ayah Dir wrote many essays and books in many disciplines of Islamic studies: ‘aqīdah (Islamic theology), manṭiq (logic), and fiqh (Islamic law). Most of his writings were done in the field of Islamic theology, which in a way indicates his mastery and interest in this field. Among Ayah Dir’s essays and books are as follows:\textsuperscript{14}

2. *Mabḥath al-Kalām fī ‘Ilm al-Kalām*
3. *Asās al-I’tiqād li Ɗu’afā’ al-Bilād*
4. *Cermin Suluhan Pada Menyatakan Hukum Sembelihan*
5. *Taqrīb al-Ikhwān fī Ta’līm ‘Aqā’id al-Īmān*
6. *Tashīl al-Ḍu’afā’ wa Radd Ba’ḍ Aḥwāl al-Sufahā’*
7. *Ta’līm al-Awlād fī Dhikr Ba’ḍ Aḥwāl al-‘Ibād*
8. *Tabyīn Kadhb al-Muṭ̲araẓ̲ī fī mā Yata’allaq bi al-Bārī*
9. *Tadhkirah li Dhaw’i al-Afkār fī mā Yamur al-Insān min al-A’mār*
10. *Wasā’il ‘Ilm al-Kalām Rif’ah wa Raḥmat li al-Awwām*
11. *Risālah Manhaj Ahl al-Sunnah*
12. *Irshād al-Jāwiyīn ilā Sabīl al-‘Ulamā’ al-‘Āmilīn*

**Introduction to Risālah Manhaj Ahl al-Sunnah**

*Risālah Manhaj Ahl al-Sunnah* is a 48-page treatise, published by Percetakan Saudara Press in Pattani. This


treatise, as shown at the cover and first page, was written by Haji Abdul Qadir bin Haji Wangah bin Abdul Latif bin Othman, Shaykh al-Ma’had al-Islāmī, Wakaf Budi Sekam Mayu, Fatani. Due to the small pages of this treatise, there is no content page provided. Among the subheadings provided in this treatise are as follows:

1. Muqaddimah (preface)
2. Ayat Qur’an terbahagi kepada dua bahagi
3. Beberapa jalanan Ulama bersabit dengan ayat-ayat Mutashabihat
4. Penyakit Muslimin dan Muslimat daripada i’tiqād yang salah
5. Ini satu penjagaan diri kita masing-masing daripada perasan-perasan Allah itu bertempat ilā ākhirihi
6. Bicaraan setengah-setengah daripada tafsir-tafsir ayat mutashabihat
7. Marilah pula kita perati satu ayat Allah ta’ala juga
8. Mari pula kita perati firman tuhan
9. Marilah pula kita perati tafsir satu firman
10. Mari pula perati firman ini
11. Mari pula kita perati firman ini
12. Mari pula kita perati firman tuhan
13. Mari pula kita perati tafsir firman tuhan
14. Mari pula kita perati tafsir firman tuhan
15. Mari pula kita perati tafsir firman tuhan
16. Anak-anak cucu-cicitku saudara-saudaraku yang dikasihi
17. Mari pula kita perati tafsir firmanNya taala
18. Mari pula kita perati tafsir firmanNya taala
19. Mari pula kita perati tafsir firmanNya Tuhan
20. Sekelian kekasih ku yang dihormati
21. Bicaraan segala mumkin yang mutaqqabalat yang berta‘alluq dengan dia oleh qudrah iradah Allah taala
22. Peringatan
It is very interesting and sentimental that in the last page of his Risālah, he mentions:\textsuperscript{15}

\textquote{…adalah ayahanda pada masa menulis Risalah ini berumur 65 tahun lagi pula dalam keadaan keuzuran serba serbi hanya boleh menulis ini dengan sebab disambilkan hisap sebanga rokok perbuatan Indonesia yang bernama Gudang Garam. Yang mula-mula mengajar ayahanda hisap rokok itu oleh anakanda Haji Abdul Aziz bin Ismail Wakaf Budi, Sekam. Ia kirim kepada ayahanda dari Malaysia. Oleh itu, sehampir-hampir ayahanda nak pernamaka ini dengan Risalah Gudang Garam. Akan tetapi mujurlah juga anakanda Haji Husin bin Manaf Muhammad Abd Ijok tolong pernamakan dia dengan nama tersebut pada kulitnya itu…}"

In the previous paragraph, it could be seen that initially, Ayah Dir intended to name this treatise as \textit{Risālah Gudang Garam}, showing his humbleness by ascribing the name of this important treatise to the name of a cigarette brand. This is not to tarnish the reputation of the treatise, nor the important contents of this treatise. According to Masakaree Ardae, the final name of this treatise was wisely advised by his son-in-law, Haji Husin bin Manaf Muhammad Abd Ijok, who suggested the name \textit{Risālah Manhaj Ahl al-Sunnah}.\textsuperscript{16} From the textual analysis methodology done on this treatise, it could be said that the latter name is much better and best suited, based on the ideas and advices provided for Ayah Dir in this treatise.

\textit{Risālah Manhaj Ahl al-Sunnah} is a writing that focuses in tackling the issue of the interpretation of the


\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid}.
mutashābihāt, namely the ambiguous verses and traditions in the Islamic sources of knowledge. The rationale for the writing of this treatise is mentioned in the preface, as stated¹⁷:

“…adalah pada tahun 1404H bertalu-talu datang soalan daripada saudaraku yang kasih kepada agama yang bersabit dengan firman Nya Ta‘ala: al-Raḥmān ‘alā al-‘Arsh istawā, ertinya tuhan yang bernama Raḥmān itu atas ‘Arsh tertinggi Ia. Rupa soalan ialah apakah murad dan tujuan daripada ayat itu? Maka hamba pun taqrirlah dan suratlah sedikit-sedikit taqrir yang Allah beri kepada hamba dengan wasitah melihat dan faham ibarat-ibarat ulama Ahl al-Sunnah dengan secara daif hamba, maka mereka itu pun terima dan nampak pada mata-mata hati masing-masing tetapi dengan panjang lebar dan ibarat-ibarat ulama itu mereka itu tidak mendapat kerana maklumat mereka itu daripada jumlah orang awam atau mubtadi’…”

As it has been proven in the history of Islam, especially in the firaq or Islamic sectarian studies, many deviant groups had emerged due to the misunderstandings of the mutashābihāt, such as by the literalists, mushabbihah, muʿattilah, and the mujassimah.¹⁸ This history has been described by many Muslim historians, including Ibn Khalduṇ (732-808AH) through his Muqaddimah:

¹⁷ Ibid., 1-2.
“But there were a few innovators in their time who occupied themselves with the ambiguous verses and delved into anthropomorphism. One group operated with the plain meaning of the relevant verses. They assumed anthropomorphism for Gods’ essence, in that they believed that He has hands, feet, and a face. Thus, they adopted a clear anthropomorphism and were in opposition to the verses stating that God is devoid (of human attributes).”

What could be learned from verse 7 of Surah Ali Imran, and from the long history of Muslim sects, this issue of misinterpretation of the mutashābihāt is a phenomenon in Muslim society, particularly in making sense the naqīlī proofs which deal with the essence, attributes, and actions of God. Therefore, it is understandable when Ayah Dir remarks that his rationale for the writing of Risālah Manhaj Ahl al-Sunnah is due to many questions that he received in understanding the meaning of al-Rahmān ‘alā al-Arsh istawā (the Most Merciful [who is] above the Throne established). Due to that, the publication of this special and unique treatise, which answers the questions of many Muslims in understanding the mutashābihāt in the Islamic traditions, is very much welcomed. Furthermore, the treatise was prepared in a very simple manner, using contextual, precise and concise words, which helped to promote the understanding of Islamic faith among Muslims.

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21 Surah Taha 20: verse 5.
Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama‘ah’s Ta‘wīl Methodology in Risālah Manhaj Ahl al-Sunnah

In answering the questions and confusions addressed by the Muslims in Thailand regarding the interpretation of the mutashābihāt, Ayah Dir produced his Risālah Manhaj Ahl al-Sunnah and based his answers according to the concept of ta‘wīl as taught in the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā‘ah’s teachings. According to Masakaree Ardae,²² the treatise was published around the year 1404-1406AH, or during the 1990’s, where there were many proponents of salafī preachers, who taught the condemnation of ta‘wīl on the mutashābihāt in the Islamic teachings. People were taught to only practice tafwīḍ or full surrender of the meanings to God as taught in verse 7 of Ali ‘Imran, which says:

...فَأَمَّا الَّذينَ في قُلُوبهمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبيعُونَ ما تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ

ابْتِغَاءَ الْفَتَّانِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْویلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْویلَهُ إِلّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِلْمِ رَبِّنَا.

“But those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part thereof that is not of well-established meaning. Seeking discord, and searching for its hidden meanings, but no one knows its true meanings except Allah. And those who are firmly grounded on knowledge say: “We believe on the Book; the whole of it is from our Lord...”

Therefore, to some salafī preachers, the practise of ta‘wīl on the mutashābihāt is considered as wrong and sinful. This practise is understood as ‘seeking discord, and searching for its hidden meanings, but no one knows its

²² Masakaree Ardae, Senior Lecturer of Islamic Studies at Universiti Sultan Azlan Shah, “Interview on the Risālah Manhaj Ahli Sunnah, Biography and the Contribution of Ayah Dir Sekam,” Universiti Sultan Azlan Shah (USAS), 3 December 2018.
true meanings except Allah.’ The practise of ta’wīl is then also regarded as futile and useless, which could only harm one’s true faith towards the wisdom of Allah SWT, who revealed His revelation upon humankind. Many Islamic legal rulings (fatāwā) and books were used to defend this salafi stand, such as the Islamic legal rulings by the Saudi Arabia Muslim scholars and their sermons.

Nevertheless, according to scholars such as Ḥammūdah Gharābah and Yaḥyā Ḥāshim Ḥasan Farghal, Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā‘ah teaches both approaches, ta’wīl and tafwīd, when dealing and understanding the mutashābihāt. Both approaches are taught by most scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā‘ah, depending on the contexts and supporting proofs.23 For example, in the text of Jawharah al-Tawḥīd, Ibrāhīm al-Laqānī (d. 1631) remarks on these two approaches in understanding the mutashābihāt, as stated below24:

و كل نص أوهم التشبيهها، أوله أو فوض ورم تنزيها

Which means: “And every text that would appear to imply similitude: interpret it or consign, and always affirm transcendence.”

In the case of applying ta’wīl, it is impossible to deny any ta’wīl approach from the renowned early Muslim scholars (‘ulamā’ al-salaf). As presented in a research by Muḥammad ‘Ādil al-Kayyālī,25 many prominent salaf

scholars apply ta’wīl in their interpretation of the mutashābihāt. These renowned early Muslim scholars are as follows: ‘Izz al-Dīn ibn ‘Abd al-Salām (577-660AH), al-Nawawī (631-676AH), Ibn Kathīr (700-774AH), Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (773-852AH), al-Baghawī (1044-1122AH), and al-Shawkānī (1173-1255AH). Both approaches are taken as the official approaches of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā‘ah in dealing with the mutashābihāt, from learning Allah’s transcendence: “laysa kamithlihi shay’un,” which means: there is nothing whatever like unto Him, as stated in verse 11 of Surah al-Shura 42:

فَاطئِرُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَمنَ الأَنْعَامِ أَزْوَاجًا يَذْرَؤُوكُمْ فِيهِ لِيَسْتَأْمِلَكُمْ ُ"ثَبَتَٰٓ بَيْنِيَّةً شَيْئَٗٔٞ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصيِّرُ (He is) the Creator of the heavens and the earth: He has made for you pairs from among yourselves, and pairs among cattle: by this means does He multiply you: there is nothing whatever like unto Him, and He is the One that hears and sees (all things).”

In the Risālah Manhaj Ahl al-Sunnah, with regards to the approaches of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā‘ah, Ayah Dir advises:\26\n
“Dan berkhilaf ulama kita pula pada mengatakan yang manakah daripada dua mazhab terlebih elok dan aula. Maka berkata setengahnya mazhab salaflah terlebih utama diikutkan kerana terlebih selamat daripada menggarung-ngerung. Dan berkata setengahnya mazhab khalafalah terlebih utama

kerana terlebih teguh pada pengetahuan dan terlebih tahu dengan maksud. Kalau begitu siapa-siapa daripada kita suka nak turut mana-mana pun daripada dua mazhab itu, turutlah dengan tidak kecelaan apa-apa.”

From the textual analysis on his Risālah Manhaj Ahl al-Sunnah, it is found that Ayah Dir arranged his answers in very coherent themes and sequence as explained below:

1. Division of Qur’anic verses into mutashābihāt and muhkamāt.
2. The Qur’an was revealed not only in Arabic language, but also in Arabic language style and form (balāghah, amthāl, etc.).
3. Prohibition from making literal interpretation on the mutashābihāt but must resort to ta’wīl.
4. People can follow three madhhabs in ta’wīl, namely i) Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash’arī (ta’wīl as ma‘āni attributes); ii) Salaf (only ta’wīl ijmālī & prohibiting tafṣīlī); or iii) Khalaf (ta’wīl tafṣīlī).
5. Prohibition from ascribing non-Godly attributes to Allah (tajsīm, tashbīh and takyīf).
6. Two divisions of ta’wīl; i) ta’wīl ijmālī and ii) ta’wīl tafṣīlī.
7. The difference between the salaf (mazhab salaf) and the wrong interpreters (mazhab salah) in purifying God (tanzīh Allāh).
8. ‘Faith diseases’ stemmed from these wrong beliefs; Allah has a body, Allah acts like His creations, Allah possesses limbs and bodily parts like human etc.
9. Guidance in refuting these wrong beliefs; to follow the interpretations by highly recognized Muslim scholars.
10. Examples of mutashābihāt traditions in Islamic teachings and their correct interpretations.
Next, as mentioned directly by Ayah Dir in his *Risālah*, there are many references used to support his arguments on the use of *ta’wīl* on the *mutashābihāt*. These are among the important references in understanding this issue in the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā’ah’s teachings:

1. Al-Qur’ān al-Karīm
2. Ḥāshiyah al-Dusūqī ‘alā Umm al-Barāhīn
3. *Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī*
4. *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*
5. *Tafsīr al-Nasafī*
6. Ḥāshiyah Taḥqīq al-Maqām ‘alā Kifāyah al-‘Awwām* by al-Bājūrī
9. Ḥāshiyah al-Ṣāwī
10. Ḥāshiyah al-Bujayrimī
11. Ḥāshiyah al-Jamā’ah
12. Sunan al-Tirmidhī
13. *Al-Ibānah ‘an Uṣūl al-Diyānah*

Nevertheless, based on the analysis, by observing Ayah Dir’s style of writing, there could be more references to his *Risālah*, only that they were not directly mentioned unlike these 13 references.

In brief, Ayah Dir proposes that all scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā’ah apply three types of *ta’wīl* when dealing with the *mutashābihāt*. They are i) Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash’arī (*ta’wīl* as *maʿāni* attributes); ii) Salaf (only *ta’wīl* *ijmālī* and prohibiting *tafṣīlī*); or iii) Khalaf (*ta’wīl* *tafṣīlī*). If these three approaches are bound with the divinity of Allah, there are no condemnations or faults that can be blamed. Therefore, every Muslim is given the freedom to choose from any of these three approaches. Some people mistakenly misunderstood the *mutashābihāt*, which in the end caused them to be afflicted with deviated
understandings such as the literalists, mushabbihah, mu’attilah, and the mujassimah. According to Ayah Dir, the guided salaf Muslims, although they applied tafwîd (surrendering the meaning to Allah alone) in interacting with the mutashābihāt, in a sense it is also ta’wîl ijmālī, namely they avoid from ascribing any non-Godly meanings, actions and attributes to Allah.27

Conclusion
Risālah Manhaj Ahl al-Sunnah is a 48-page treatise, published by Percetakan Saudara Press in Pattani. This treatise was written by Haji Abdul Qadir bin Haji Wangah or popularly known among modern Patani Muslim scholars as Ayah Dir Sekam. Risālah Manhaj Ahl al-Sunnah is published to tackle the issue of the interpretation of the mutashābihāt or the allegorical verses and traditions in the Islamic sources of knowledge. In Surah Ali Imran verse 7, Allah SWT recorded the deviant approach taken by the people in understanding the mutashābihāt. Among these people are the mushabbihah (one who similarizes the essence, attributes and actions of God with His creations), mu’attilah (refuters of Allah’s attributes), and the mujassimah (anthropomorphist). These people are labelled by Ayah Dir as ‘mazhab salah bukan mazhab salaf” (the wrong school of thought, not the rightly guided early Muslims).

The only way to avoid and to overcome this problem, as proposed by Ayah Dir, is by following the interpretations and the three approaches of ta’wîl as shown by the majority Muslim scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā’ah. Some people were mistaken when they ascribe non-Godly attributes to Allah. Allah SWT says in al-Shûrā 42: verse 11: …laysa kamithlihi shay’un…, which means:

“there is nothing like unto Him”; and in al-Ikhlaṣ 112: verse 4, “wa lam yakun lahu kufiwan aḥad,” which means: “and there is none like unto Him.”

Findings have shown that Ayah Dir’s approach of interpretation (taʿwīl ijmālī and tafṣīlī) is in line with the approaches of the renowned scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah, both classical and modern scholars. This is due to his strong relationship with the significant turāth (heritage) and muʿtabar (credible) writings by these scholars. In the same way, this is also due to his firm educational background -- being taught by many well-known Malay Muslim scholars, both in the Malay Archipelago and Mecca.

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