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## Human Development in The Works of HAMKA

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### Abstract

Hamka was a well-known Muslim scholar, especially for the Malay Muslims of Southeast Asia. Even though Hamka's scholarship is recognised by the intellectual community from Southeast Asia and the Middle East, he was also tainted with various accusations which contradicts his status as a scholar. Some of his writings were accused of being weak and does not have any value in human development. Therefore, this article tries to analyse the contents of Hamka's philosophical work that are related to human development. The philosophical works are Tasawuf Moden, Falsafah Hidup, Lembaga Hidup and Lembaga Budi. The methods of data analysis carried out in this research are inductive and comparative methods. The research found that, when Hamka discusses the development of human beings, he emphasises the element of true faith and the amount of knowledge one possesses, both of these elements are primary elements in human development.

**Keywords:** Hamka, Human, Development, Philosophical Works, South East Asia.

### Introduction

Hamka is a well-known Islamic scholar, especially among Malay Muslims in Southeast Asia. The moniker, Hamka, is an acronym or a short name from the title given to those who have performed the haj and Hamka's full name, which is Haji Abdul Malek bin Karim Amrullah, that is where the name Hamka came from. He was born on Monday the 17<sup>th</sup> of February 1908, equivalent to the 14<sup>th</sup> of Muharram 1326 in the Islamic calendar, in Kampung Tanah Sirah, Negeri Sungai Batang, Sumatera Barat, Indonesia (Hamka, 2009b). Hamka passed away on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July 1981, on a Friday, 10.40 in the morning when he was 73 years old (Rusydi, 1981).

Hamka came from a family with Minangkabau roots, he lived in a community which upheld and practised the traditions of the Minangkabau people. Hamka's grandfather, Amrullah, and his father, Abdul Karim or Haji Rasul, were respected and well-known scholars in Minangkabau (Rushdi, 2008) and in Sumatera as well (Nasir, 1984). With his family background, Hamka was a figure born into a lineage which was highly educated in Islamic knowledge and very influential in Indonesia, his father and grandparents were always occupied in spreading and defending the authenticity of the Islamic faith through many ways.

When he was young, Hamka acquired Islamic education from his father, Hamka was taught the basics of the Islamic knowledge. When he was 9 years old (1917) in Padang Panjang, Hamka studied in the village school in the morning, and in the evening, he learnt at

the *Diniyyah* school which was founded by Engku Zainuddin Labai El-Yunus or as it was known then as an Arabic school (Hamka, 2009b).

Meanwhile, when he was 10 years old (1918) at Padang Panjang, Hamka did not continue his studies at the village school, in the mornings he would learn at the *Diniyyah* school, he learnt how to read Arabic and Latin, during the evenings, Hamka would continue learning at his father's *surau* (musolla) or *pondok* (madrasa). The *surau* was then upgraded to a madrasa, which is famously known as Madrasah Tawalib (Rushdi, 2008). At the Madrasah Tawalib, Hamka started studying old scriptures, in the fields of *nahu* (arabic grammar), *akidah* Islam (Islamic faith), *fikah* (Islamic jurisprudence), *tafsir al-Quran* (al-Quran interpretation), *saraf* (arabic morphology) and others (Hamka, 2009b).

Hamka also studied at a notable Indonesian scholar's *pondok*, Syekh Ibrahim Musa, in Parabek, Indonesia. In the year 1924, Hamka travelled to the Javanese land to learn Islamic knowledge from Kiai Haji Hadikusumo (Ki Bagus Hadikusumo). Hamka also learnt from Mirza Wali Ahmad Baig, a messenger from the Ahmadiyah movement who just came from Lahore, India (HAMKA, 2009b). In Java as well, with the guidance from St. Mansur, a student and a son-in-law of HAMKA's father, he continued studying by enrolling in a course offered by Syarikat Islam under the teacher H.O.S Cokroaminoto. He also learnt from courses offered by Muhammaadiyah, which was taught by his teachers K.H. Mochtar, K.H. Fachruddin, Kiai Bagus Hadikusumo and others (Rushdi, 2008).

Different from other Islamic knowledge learnt by Hamka in Minangkabau, which only used old scriptures and focused on jurisprudence only, in the Javanese lands, HAMKA learnt about Islamic knowledge that tended more to the struggle of Muslims, spreading and defending Islam from the threats of enemies (Hamka, 2009b).

Hamka's scholarship was recognised by groups of Islamic scholars up to the international level. In Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia awarded him the honorary doctorate degree. Al-Azhar University in the Middle East also awarded him the honorary doctorate degree (Abd, 1996; Rushdi, 2008). Recognition of this level was very rare to be given to someone, especially someone who did not follow formal mainstream higher education like Hamka.

Even though Hamka was recognised by the scholarly communities from Southeast Asia and the Middle East, he was also tainted with accusations that are contradictory to his status as a scholar. A part of his efforts in writing works of literature based on the values of Islam were accused with unsettling remarks and were considered as weak and far from the values of human development that was in the Islamic faith, it was also accused that readers of his literary works will degrade in their values as a Muslim. Some of his works were also banned from circulation to the reading community. Therefore, this article tries to see the values of self-development that are present in the works of Hamka. More specifically, the research objectives in this paper are

1. To study Hamka's views on human development
2. To identify the elements of human development in Hamka's thought.

## Methodology

This research uses two types of data for analysis which are primary and secondary data. Primary data is the main data which consists of written materials or documents produced by Hamka himself. Therefore, analysis on these materials is the main process of the research. Several works of Hamka in the philosophical category, only those which are related to the human development theme, are used as primary data in this research. Hamka's philosophical

works were used to understand his basis of thought and knowledge. With that, all the parts of this research are studies based on materials obtained from libraries.

To determine which philosophical work of Hamka is to be used, the researcher referenced the philosophical works classification set by Abdul Rahman (2007), this classification was made by him in his research on Hamka's thought ethics. The philosophical works are Tasawuf Moden, Falsafah Hidup, Lembaga Hidup and Lembaga Budi. This classification was also made by HAMKA himself by stating that the four books are his philosophical works and were given the name "mutiara filsafat" (Philosophy Pearls) (Hamka, 2009a).

The methods of data analysis involved in this research are the inductive and comparative methods. The inductive method is an approach used to gather information to explain and elaborate a research phenomenon, other than that, the inductive method is also used to understand and summarise ideas or theories. Meanwhile, for the comparative method, the researcher tried to compare, arrange and categorise data to explain a situation, answer research questions and solve research problems. Thus, in this research, the process of comparison, arranging and categorisation were done with the works of Hamka so that the researcher can identify the elements of human development inside of those works.

### **Research Findings and Discussion on The Analysis**

When HAMKA discussed human development, he beforehand divided human nature into two main parts. The first part is the physical body called the rough body (physical), this part is capable of interaction with the human senses, it is a focus point for people of medicine such as doctors and pharmacists. The second part is called the fine body (spiritual) which is a focus point for psychologists, this part of the body cannot be sensed by the human senses and it is not concentrated upon by medical doctors and pharmacists (Hamka, 2007a).

Both parts of the human body, the rough body (physical) and the fine body (spiritual), are very different to each other. Having said that, Hamka explained that both are interrelated and affect each other. The connection between the rough body (physical) and the fine body (spiritual) can be clearly seen if one of the two has fallen ill (Hamka, 2007b).

Hamka stated that the relation between the physical and spiritual parts can be seen through the function of the body as a vessel for the spiritual part to live inside a human, the good of the spiritual part will be conveyed by the physical body through physical actions of the body itself. As an example, a person with a sound spirit can only prove it is sound through a sound physical state, it is impossible for a person whose physical is tainted to be acknowledged by other people as having a pure spirit (Hamka, 2009a).

Other than that, the relation between the spirit and physical part of a human can be seen if one part is affected by a malady, say the body is sick, the other part of the human will also be affected by the misfortune. As an example, Hamka stated that when the human spirit is sick from ailments such as heartbreak, grief, regret and such, the physical part of the human being will also be affected which can be seen through the face, body and other parts which become red, pale, tremble, turn skinny or fat and such. The same goes when the physical part of a human being is sick such as by means of a fever, a weak heart and such, the spirit will also be affected, the mind will not be as sharp, or memory will degrade (Hamka, 2008; Hamka, 2007b). As Hamka as stated:

*"If the spirit is healthy, light will shine by its own in the eyes, there shines a bright light, which comes from a healthy soul. So too a healthy body opens the mind, sharpens the intellect, which purifies the soul. If the spirit is in ailment, say anger*

*has fallen upon oneself, sadness, regret, it shows and affects the physical body, the eyes turn red and the body trembles. And if the body is sick, the soul will feel it too, the mind does not wander as usual, the intellect becomes dull.” (Hamka, 2007b)*

Therefore, Hamka explained that each human being is responsible to ensure the health of their body as long as they are alive, it is the duty of a human being to make sure the body and soul are healthy (Hamka, 2007a).

Thus, the process of human development requires the aspect of care for the health of the self which encompasses physical and spiritual health, if the two components are not kept well, it will interfere with the process of human development.

Hamka also stressed on the importance of a true faith in the process of human development, where the faith comes from the revelation of Allah SWT, not only something that is memorised or remembered only, it has to be believed in with certainty and faith by a person. When the revelation is accepted as the truth, then that person possesses true faith, these three processes have to be in a person for that person to possess true faith.

A person who possesses true faith not only knows but is also certain and believes in true faith. Though it has to be followed with three main components to show that a person has true faith, which are proclaiming truth with the heart, professing with the tongue and acting with the body (Hamka, 2007b).

Proclaiming truth with the heart is an act of confessing, that is not done with the parts of the body, but a proclamation by the heart of a person. The matters that have to be confessed and proclaimed its truthfulness by the heart are the matters of true faith, such as the existence of Allah SWT, the angels, scriptures of Allah SWT, His messengers and prophets, the existence of the day of judgement and the belief in the divine decree of Allah SWT.

Professing with the tongue is a confession which is a result of a person's words which profess and admit all that is in the true faith that a person possesses. Meanwhile, acting using the body is a physical action done by someone with true faith after their hearts and words are sure, have professed and admitted all that is in true faith. After that, the heart willingly bows down and is obedient to Allah SWT, it will do all that is in line with the faith and not perform actions that are against the true faith that it now possesses.

The three components above, which are proclaiming truth with the heart, professing with the tongue and acting with the body, are components of a complete true faith, which has to exist at all times throughout the life of a person who has true faith. If just one of the components disappear, it will result in the true faith being tainted, damaged or being lost altogether.

Therefore, the element of true faith in a person will make him or her realise that they are always in the presence of Allah SWT, this feeling is the main pushing factor for the life of a person with true faith (Hamka, 2007b).

This realisation will result in two main strengths in the lives of a person with true faith, the first strength is the strength to control all actions. With the realisation and belief that Allah SWT is the lord of the universe and is all-seeing, as well as all-knowing of all the actions of a creation, therefore, all actions of a person with true faith will be to the best of his or her abilities aligned to the commandments of Allah SWT. The second strength is the strength to abstain oneself from doing wrong things, this strength is a barrier for the people of true faith from doing things that are prohibited by Allah SWT.

When the element of true faith is gone or does not exist in a person, the person will continue living without the guidance of his creator which is Allah SWT, all movements and

decisions of that person's life is solely based on the needs and pleasures of a human, without guidance from Allah SWT. This situation will only make people who do not have true faith to further themselves from the truth and true happiness.

Therefore, true faith will allow the possessor to bring themselves to betterment and not to devastation. In carrying out human development, true faith is an important element that has to be in a person in order for the holistic development of the self to be truly in line with the development of a true person encapsulating the physical and spiritual aspects.

Next, in the process of human development, Hamka emphasises the element of knowledgeableability in a person. Knowledgeability is a requirement to attain success in the efforts of human development. Without knowledge, the goal of human development will not be achieved. Knowledge will allow humans to plan and execute his ambitions for human development (Hamka, 2007b).

Thus, Hamka stressed that the search for knowledge is the responsibility of all humans, through the search of knowledge done by a person, it will allow the self to have high levels of knowledge. Hamka also stressed that in Islam, the search of knowledge is obligatory for all Muslims, he says that a person who looks for knowledge is a person who is looking for light in life, whereas a person who does not search for knowledge is heading for darkness (HAMKA, 2007a).

To obtain knowledge, Hamka is of the opinion that humans have to use their intellect to analyse information gathered from observations through the human senses, all those information will be used by the intellect to make decisions to produce knowledge (HAMKA, 2009a).

However, Hamka stresses that the job of the intellect has to be guided by revelation from Allah SWT so that the intellect will not be left alone, and not be misguided from the true objectives and good deeds. With the guidance of revelation from Allah SWT, the intellect will determine the direction of humans which is to the best of this world and the hereafter, which is the main goal of knowledgeableability in humans (Hamka, 2007a; Hamka, 2009a).

*Hamka explains this matter in *Lembaga Hidup*: "With the closure of the intellect's path, humans are barred from humanity. Their status is the same as animals. The intellect and thought are handed to the hands of "beliau-beliau" preachers of religion. Therefore, in the religions that have been tainted by the hands of man, we do not hear the advancement of intellect and thought, knowledge and arts. Only in the lands that are guided by thought can advancement be achieved. For only when Islam arrived, was intellect acknowledged. All the knowledge that is brought with Islam, requires thought, requires dissection by the power of the mind." (Hamka, 2007a)*

Hamka also stated that humans have to seek for as much knowledge as they can, but he gives a reminder that no matter how high the knowledgeableability of a person, in comparison to the knowledge of Allah SWT, the knowledge of man is very little. He says if all humans that have ever lived were to scale all their knowledge, it will still not compete to the knowledge of Allah SWT (Hamka, 2009a).

Therefore, to gain knowledge and seek blessings from Allah SWT, Hamka, reminds knowledge seekers to set the goal of knowledge to seek and find the pleasure of Allah SWT. Humans have to be always patient because the process of finding knowledge requires a long time and it continues until the end of a life. Other than that, we cannot give up in seeking

knowledge, this will hinder the journey of knowledge seeking. The relationship between a student and teacher has to be kept well, a student's manners must be well preserved with the teacher (Hamka, 2007a).

Those with knowledge are given a higher status than those who do not have knowledge, because people with knowledge have their own status, Hamka explains that knowledgeable people must act accordingly to the level of knowledge they possess, if their actions are contradictory to their knowledge, it will affect their status as a person with knowledge (Hamka, 2009a).

A person with a high level of knowledge has responsibilities towards the knowledge they possess, first they must understand thoroughly what they know, knowledge cannot be something memorised only. A person who understands the knowledge he possesses is able to display the knowledge in the form of actions, according to the perspective of his knowledge. This is different from knowledge that is only memorised, if it is translated into actions, the actions might deviate from the true meaning of that knowledge. As an example, a person practices the knowledge that he possess, but his practices are not suitable with the environment and needs of that time, whereas according to the real perspective of the knowledge, it requires careful understanding of the time and needs of a situation before that action is practised (Hamka, 2009a).

The second responsibility of a person with high knowledge is to practice the knowledge he possesses. By practicing the knowledge possessed, this will benefit the practitioner. Knowledge is good, but to extract the good out from knowledge is through practising the knowledge, then the goodness can be reaped by the person who practises what he knows. In fact, by practising the knowledge possessed, Hamka explains that it will automatically produce and increase knowledge in a person, where that knowledge is learnt through experience and not from studies (Hamka, 2009a).

In the context of practising knowledge, it is a commendable and praiseworthy effort, but Hamka reminds that practising knowledge can be wrong in certain conditions. The act of practising knowledge will become reprehensible when a person uses knowledge for other purposes other than to seek the pleasure of Allah SWT. Like that of a person who uses knowledge for his own gain and to elevate his status, or use knowledge to divide people. All these wrongdoings appear when a person uses knowledge for other than to seek the pleasure of Allah SWT (Hamka, 2009a).

Thus, it is understood that in the process of human development, the result that is desired from a person's knowledgeability is not measured only in the amount of knowledge gained, but it is also related to the quality of the knowledge that a person possesses. This is because the height of a person's character is based on his knowledge, though not only the amount of knowledge but also the quality, mannerisms in seeking knowledge, the responsibilities towards knowledge and Allah's acceptance of a person with knowledge. In the process of human development, having a high amount of knowledge does not guarantee the height of a person's character in comparison to someone with less knowledge if the knowledge is not applied in developing oneself.

## **Conclusion**

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that Hamka highlights the discussion of human development. In the process of human development, Hamka stresses on the aspects of true faith and the height of a person's knowledgeability, which are the primary elements of human development. Other than that, it can be concluded that Hamka used his literary

works to visualise and explain the efforts of human development based on the teachings of Islam. As an active writer who has responsibilities to the religion of Islam, Hamka stressed on the teachings of Islam in the process of human development which was discussed by him. Therefore, Hamka's works can act as information providers and knowledge on human development which can help individuals develop themselves.

In terms of the theoretical contribution to the theory, this study has expanded the theory of human development from the aspect of spiritual and physical elements of human. A human being needs to be developed comprehensively and balanced between spiritual and physical elements. From the contextual point of view, this study makes a practical contribution to the implementation of human development efforts. Especially for book writers, writing works can play a significant role in conveying the message of human development to target readers. Therefore, book writing activities needs to be done more actively and strengthened with the elements of balance between the spiritual and the physical in the contents of the book.

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