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## Islamic Literary Works in Building Personality as Wasilah to Preachers

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### Abstract

The relationship between literary works and readers is very close as it plays the role as *wasilah* of goodness in life. This is due to the huge responsibilities held by authors in delivering useful messages to people. The literary work is not mere entertainment but also a medium of *da'wah* in conveying the kindness, truth and beauty of religion. In fact, this has to do with the formation of readers' personality especially among youth. Thus, inspiration in the work becomes the main subject as a support of an author. In line with that, from Ibn Qayyim's view, inspiration from the perspective of *al-Huda* (direction) and *al-Rashad* (guidance) is needed in an author to deliver useful messages to readers. This paper will explore the role of *da'wah* in Islamic literary work based on *da'wah bi al-Qalam* to form the readers' personality. Based on the study, it clearly shows that *da'wah bi al-Qalam* is necessary for an author in delivering useful messages and developing good personality.

**Keywords:** Preacher, Literature, Literary Works, Islamic, Personality.

### Introduction

The development of Malay literature shows a strong connection between work, author and people in developing a nation's civilization. This connection is related to literary work produced by creative writers to be presented to the readers through reading materials that could lead to kindness (*al-Khayr*), truth (*al-Haqq*) and beauty (*al-Jamal*) in religion. Literary works consist of various genres, whether modern, such as novels, short stories, dramas and poems or traditional, such as *pantun*, *syair*, etc. and should deliver useful messages to targeted audiences. This is due to the role of literary works as a connector in expressing good values in life demands the ability and efforts of authors in their work. Thus, the task of the authors is very important in delivering messages to the readers.

Accordingly, in the early stages of the development of Islam, Islamic writers used literature as a weapon to repel the accusations of the enemy and defend the purity of faith. It has also been used as a source of inspiration in uplifting the spirit of fight among Muslims. When Islam started to have a strong position, literature has become a medium of *da'wah* in delivering the messages of morality and education. Next, it has also used as a field of creativity to highlight the greatness of Islam to

public.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, this paper will portray the relationship between literary preachers in producing Islamic literary works as *wasilah* in forming the readers' personality. It was found that Islamic literary works in the development of the Malay literature field has become the field of da'wah, that is crucial as the support in forming a good personality among the people. The delivery of Islamic literary works to the society in forming personality is not just to place them as literary preachers, but this group of people should really express the real meaning of da'wah in each of them. This is because, da'wah is not meant for specific groups but, it is a huge responsibility for each Muslim as demanded in al-Quran.

### Islamic Literature and Da'wah

It was found that Islamic literature is combination between two words, "literature" and Islam" that refers to a beautiful expression and a picture or perspective of Islam about nature, life and mankind. Apart from that, according to Arabic language, literature is considered as "manner" that leads to forming a man with good qualities personality and keep him from negative characteristics. Generally, the properties of Islamic literature are to carry the truth, to preserve the elements that has existed in the tradition of Islam, to carry the message of sincerity, to show the beauty of God, consist of symbolic elements that comes from pure heart and mind, universal messages, positive, creating the soul of a man and close relationship with *tasawuf*. Referring to these general definitions, they clearly portrayed that literature and Islam are pairs that should be analyzed in a work to produce a good piece of work in educating the readers. Thus, the role of authors is not mere producing works, but also to aware of the huge responsibilities they have on their shoulders. Literature and Islam are a union that strengthens human civilizations to good values and repel the destructive elements in life. Accordingly, the views of several Islamic figures regarding Islamic literary are crucial to be explored as a reference and guideline for homeland authors.

It was found that the development of Islamic literature has gone through a long phase before it is known as "Islamic literature". Instead, what have been said as "Islamic literary works" also shows a strong relationship with the evolution of Islamic literature whether worldwide or local. Therefore, the view of several literature and Islam figures is required in order to explain Islamic literature as a subject in the development of homeland literary works. This has been agreed based on the views of world Islamic figures like Sayyid Qutb, Muhammad Qutb, Najib Kilani, 'Imad al-Din Khalil, Sayid Hassan al-Nadawi, and also by the local figures such as Yusof Zaky Yaacob, Shafie Abu Bakar, Lutfi Abas, Shahnnon Ahmad, Uthman el-Muhammady, Ismail Hamid, S. Othman Kelantan and Muhammad Kamal Hassan. Most of them have a clear view that Islamic literature depends on the soul of Islamic literature that hold onto their beliefs, faith, practices, character and morality. It is a must in order to produce literary works that will convey the message of Islam with awareness to society. This does not mean that Islamic literature focused only the discussion related to ibadah such as the perform of prayers, fasting, *haji* and the characters that limited to *ustaz*, *tok imam*, *tok lebai* and with attires such as robes, headscarves, skullcaps and so on. This type of work is named religious work or religious literature. Instead, Islamic literature has a wider dimension and scope. It consists of field of nature, life and mankind also the relationship with its creator. The reality of Islamic literature is the medium of da'wah, that involves aspects of life as a whole. In fact, the main element in Islamic literature is literature that consists of da'wah elements that requires the authors to understand the meaning of tauhid in strengthening the innate to develop works for the readers' soul. This shows that Islamic

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literature is a container guided by God that will enlighten and lead to the right path together with pen, ideas, characteristics of our work that will lead to the truth, kindness and beauty.<sup>i</sup> Thus, it is clear that Islamic literature connects a strong relationship in uniting mankind on earth in line with the responsibilities that is held by the authors as preachers.

Because of that, inspiration that leads to *taqwa* and avoid badness has become the priority in produce of works for an author. Instead, referring to Ibn Qayyim, inspiration could show direction (*al-Huda*) and guidance (*al-Rashad*) to readers.<sup>ii</sup> This has been stated in surah al-Syams verse 7-8 that discussed about the inspiration that is based on *taqwa* (good) and *fasik* (bad) as per translated: "And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it and inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness" clearly encouraged authors to choose between kindness or badness. Therefore, literary works are used a medium of da'wah in completing whether good inspiration or bad inspiration. It is found that da'wah is a mold that is able to unite the relationship of mankind with The Creator, the relationship between mankind and the relationship between mankind and nature. This is in line with surahs in al-Quran that stressed on the importance of da'wah in life. Thus, for instance, was expressed in surah al-Maidah verse 48 with translation: "so race to [all that is] good." In addition, surah Ali Imran verse 114 also highlighted the importance of placing kindness as a main place and encouraging people towards prosperity and harmony as follows translation: "They believe in Allah and the Last Day, and they enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and hasten to good deeds. And those are among the righteous." Apart from that, another surah that describes the importance of da'wah in life is surah an-Nahl verse 125, surah Yusuf verse 108, surah al-Fussilat verse 33 and surah al-Ahzab verse 72. All these surahs encouraged people to spread da'wah and put da'wah as a responsibility that has to be carried by each Muslim on earth as a platform to carry kindness, truth and beauty in Islam.

Accordingly, the development of Malay literature shows that Islamic literary works is not just a result of contests, competition and prizes labelled as "Islamic literature" instead the one that is not labelled as Islamic. As examples are the results from *Hadiah Sastera Perdana Malaysia (HSPM)*, *Hadiah Sastera Kumpulan Utusan*, *Hadiah Pak Sako*, *Sayembara Menulis Jubli Emas DBP* and so on. In fact, based on the works produced by author with a religious education background also shows the presence of Islamic literature due to the properties of Islamic literature itself that has a wide scope. This can be observed in numbers of established authors, prolific authors and young authors who strive in producing works that encourage readers towards kindness, truth and beauty about religion and Islam. Also, with the appearance of Islamic book publisher that take part in contributing spreading da'wah of Islam through Islamic literary works such as Galeri Ilmu Sdn. Bhd, Telaga Biru Sdn. Bhd, al-Hidayah Publishers Sdn. Bhd and so on.

It is found that those works have put Islam as a medium in delivering the good messages to readers. Similarly, the role played by the authors that joined whether contests, competition or literary prize that is not only to strive for the money reward but, to stress on the quality and da'wah particularly when completing a work. Years after years, for example novels that resulted from *Hadiah Sastera Kumpulan Utusan (HSKU)* shows works that placed the characters and great characteristics as a lesson to youth. Although there were novels that has won *HSKU* were not labelled as "Islamic novel", but the work itself that placed religion and Islam as the main support in delivering together with the presentation of beautiful language that made these works portrays the real features of Islamic literary

works. This can be seen in numbers of novels published by Utusan Publications & Distributors Sdn. Bhd who has won *HSKU* since 1980s up till now. Besides, the efforts of *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* in organizing various contests, competition and prizes also show that works that is prioritized to be publish is the one that carry good values demanded in religion. This shows that the awareness and responsibility of the authors on message of da'wah that should be settled on earth in encouraging the readers towards kindness (*al-Khayr*), truth (*al-Haqq*) and beauty (*al-Jamal*) in Islam was obeyed.

Thus, the presence or Islamic literary work in the development of Malay literature shows a close relationship between authors and religion. This is in line with the development of Islamic literature that has been spread with the presence of Islam to Malaya. In fact, this is in line with the efforts of da'wah done by religious preachers to spread Islam worldwide. As Islam develops as a result from the efforts of preachers, literature that is combined with Islam became "Islamic literature" then also plays the same role in matter of da'wah. It is found that the matters of da'wah has certain approaches apart from the efforts that has to be done by *da'i* (preachers) with their own level of da'wah. In line with that, the approach of da'wah is divided into three which are *bi al-lisan* (speech, talk, debate, calls, persuasion and others that used tongue as a medium), *bi al-hal* (charity, lessons in daily life) and *bi al-Qalam or al-kitabah* (writing whether in books, article, film script, drama).

Accordingly, Nawfal (1977) stated that da'wah is an effort that can be done by anyone who has the ability in giving advice in the form of right direction or guidance to Muslims. The work of da'wah has no barrier and limitation of time no matter of place and time. The work of da'wah stops when someone is called to meet Allah SWT, which, when one has to meet The Creator. Works of da'wah is continued by the preachers for the sake of upholding the religion of Allah until the day of judgement. Next, al-Qaradawi (1978) explained that da'wah is an activity of encouraging people to be closed with the teachings of Islam, do whatever that Allah commands and leave all that is forbidden, specialize all forms of self-slavery to Allah SWT and ask for help only from SWT. In fact, da'wah also encourages people to the path of Islam with good words (*ahsanul qaula*), the best work (*ahsanul amala*) and proves that the author themselves a preacher (*da'i*) that has a noble personality.

In line with that, the level of da'wah basically divided into three which are: explaining (*ta'rif*), formation (*takwin*), implementation (*tanfidz*). This can be clearly observed in an Islamic literary work that utters explanation (*ta'rif*) in the work with the formation (*takwin*) of moral values and implementation (*tanfidz*) of good messages towards religion. Authors strive to provide the level of explanation (*ta'rif*) based on inspirations that offers *taqwa* for people with level of formation (*takwin*) of characters and good characteristics as a channel to educate the readers and next, level of implementation (*tanfidz*) in achieving the purpose of kindness, truth and beauty in producing work. This is in line with what has been stated in al-Quran through surah al-Shu'ara' verse 224-227 as per translated: "Do you not see that in every valley they roam and that they say what they do not do? Except those [poets] who believe and do righteous deeds and remember Allah often and defend [the Muslims] after they were wronged." This verse clearly shows that the role of an author in distributing kindness, truth and beauty in religion is the priority in producing work.

### **Da'wah Bi al-Qalam in Forming Personality**

From the perspective of Islam, the importance of noble personality is demanded in young generation's daily life. This is because those groups are the next generation that will be the nation's

leadership and harmony. Therefore, personality is one's character in forming themselves with characteristics that builds personality is crucial to be instilled in each youth. This is due to one's unique personality that differ himself with another that will form the personality and the Islamic manner in line with the targeted level of psychology. The word *al-Syakhsiyyah* in Arabic shows characteristics that differs one from another include man and woman in forming respective personality. Thus, based on the word *al-Syakhsiyyah*, then the word "personality" existed in Malay language with the same meaning, character. Instead, it has been clearly explained through *Kamus Dewan*, personality means character, which is to seek for knowledge and completing the process of personality formation to become a great man. Therefore, the development of personality refers to the aspect of self-changing in oneself whether towards positive or negative, it has to be explained to children from an early age in order to form the personality in a family institution. In fact, the development of personality also portrays the morals and attitude with the goal of making someone civilized, intellectual, pure and competitive.

From that, *da'wah bi al-Qalam* or *al-kitabah* which is to encourage people wisely to the right path based on what Allah SWT commanded through the art of writing is very significant in forming readers' personality. It is found that the use the word "*qalam*" refers to what Allah SWT stated through surah al-Qalam verse 1 as per translated: "Nun. By the pen and what they inscribe, promotes mankind to use pen wisely as the record of kindness, truth and beauty in religious life." Through the pen shows a close relationship with author in delivering the message to targeted readers and then form their personality. In fact, *da'wah bi al-Qalam* is also a charity for its author as it brings a lot of benefits for those who does research and there will always be a research for the work even when the author has passed away. Therefore, generally, *dakwah bi al-Qalam* portrays the importance of a preacher (*da'i*) to encourage the society towards good based on the teachings of Islam and whole aspects of life through al-Quran, al-Hadis and works. For that, *da'wah bi al-Qalam* is very effective in spreading Islam, so that society will not get involved in media that sometimes can deliver misleading information.<sup>iii</sup> This is in line with the verses in al-Quran that promotes towards enjoining good and forbidding wrong in order to realize *da'wah bi al-Qalam*. As an example, from surah al-Jathiyah, verse 15 as per translated: "Whoever does a good deed - it is for himself; and whoever does evil - it is against the self. Then to your Lord you will be returned." Apart from that, surah Fatir, verse 28, surah Yusuf, verse 2, and surah al-Qasas, verse 77 also suggest about the importance of promoting noble values in daily life for mankind's benefit. Those surahs encourage people to be ready to strengthen oneself as a preacher. Thus, it is clear that through *da'wah bi al-Qalam* enables the delivery of messages about kindness, truth and beauty of Islam through work that can be the glory signature of religion in life.

Thus, in the context of the development of Malay literature shows that the relationship between the author and literary work is crucial in forming the personality of the readers. It is found that the role of an author as a preacher with turning literary works as a medium of *da'wah bi al-Qalam* in contributing to formation of noble personality among the society. Therefore, it is clear that the activity of *da'wah* in writing through pen (writing) could freshen the soul of an author in teaching lessons to the readers. This proves that literature is not just to satisfy one's lust and narrow mind. In fact, the responsibility and role of an author as a literary preacher through *da'wah bi al-Qalam* is massive in order to build the civilization of a nation and form a noble personality of a society.

### Conclusion

Based on this discussion about the relationship between da'wah, literature, Islamic literary works and personality, few findings are highlighted. First, the relationship of da'wah in literary works is not just to observe works with noble values, but also to highlight the role of the author as a preacher. This is because, as a literary preacher, the characteristics as a *da'i* is a must in authors. For example, authors must first develop the noble personality as an example to the readers. One author must prepare themselves with kindness, truth and beauty that is centred by Islam. In this case, inspiration that leads to *taqwa* is demanded and inspiration that leads to negativity should be prevented. Secondly, Islamic works is not necessarily the result of contests, competition and prizes labelled as "Islamic literature" instead the meaning of "Islamic literary works" itself consist of a wide scope. It is found that Islamic works are not just to present the characters of religious figures and basic matters in Islam, but beyond to global issues with beautiful arrangements of language that can lead the readers to the mighty of The Creator. One's strength of *tauhid* and understanding of religion has become the measure for each author in delivering an Islamic work to not stray away from the path of al-Quran and al-Hadis. Thus, regardless of gender, status and educational background, each of the authors should be a "literary preacher" that puts the inspiration of kindness over the negative inspirations as per stated in surah al-Syams.

Thirdly, the relationship between literary preacher and Islamic literary works in forming readers' personality is demanded in the development of homeland literature. This is because, the literary work is used as *wasilah* that guide, lead and observe youth in the nation's education system with noble values. Through a good quality and full of good messages of reading materials, truth and beauty that is centred by Islam as a whole will create a great civilization in a country. Meanwhile, today, society has been exposed to the challenges of technology and globalization that tests the noble personality and nurturing the identity of youth. Thus, in this situation, da'wah *bi al-Qalam* plays an important role in realizing the relationship between literary preacher with Islamic literary works and the development of personality that reach its meaning and target as per stated in the development of homeland Malay literature and nation's education system.

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