

# Character Indexes of the People in the Works of Raja Ali Haji

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**Abstract**—Character education has been re-implemented in every level of educational institutions in Indonesia. This paper is a result of the research of character indexes to the people in the works of Raja Ali Haji. Five works of Raja Ali Haji, namely Syair Abdul Muluk, Gurindam Dua Belas, Thamarat al-Muhimmah, Tuhfat al-Nafis, and Syair Gemala Mestika Sinar Alam, were analyzed. This paper belonged to descriptive qualitative research and content analysis was used to analyze the data. The findings show that the works of Raja Ali Haji contain twenty-one character indexes to the people. As a result, the works of Raja Ali Haji can be referred to as a way of life and they can be used as learning materials for character education.

**Keywords**—character; character education; index; literary works; people

## I. INTRODUCTION

Raja Ali Haji rahimahullah (1809-1873) is the most preeminent author among intellectuals in the Kingdom of Riau-Lingga during the period of 19th century. He has written two books in the field of Malay language with which the field of education merged in it. Those books are *Bustan al-Katibin* (Grammar of Malay, 1850) and *Kitab Pengetahuan Bahasa* (Dictionary of Malay, 1858). His works in the field of language made Riau Islands Malay language as the embryo of the Indonesia national language [1,2]. In the field of law and government, he produced *Muqaddima Fi Intizam* (1887) and *Tsamarat Al-Muhimmah* (1888). In the field of history, he produced *Tuhfat Al-Nafis* (1865), *Silsilah Melayu dan Bugis* (Malay and Bugis genealogy) (1866), *Tawarikh al-Sughra* (The Smaller Chronicle), *Tawarikh al-Wusta* (The Middle Chronicle), *Tawarikh al-Kubra* (The Larger Chronicle), the *Peringatan Sejarah Negeri Johor* (Historic Memorial of Johor State), as well as the history of Riau-Lingga and its conquered regions. He also produced a Malay philosophical work which was derived from Islamic teachings. This work was composed in the form of poetry viz. *Gurindam Dua Belas* and it became popular in Indonesia, Malaysia, and other Malay Countries ever since. His literary works (poetry) with which religious values contained in it were *Syair* (poem) *Abdul Muluk* (1845), *Syair Suluh Pegawai* (1866), *Syair Siti Shianah* (1866), *Syair Awai*, *Syair Sinar Gemala Mestika Alam* (1895), *Syair Taman Permata*, and *Syair Warnasari* [3]. He also wrote a unique type of poetry that was *Ikat-Ikatan Dua Belas Puji* (1858) in which *pantun* (traditional poetry) and poems were mixed.

In his work of *Gurindam Dua Belas*, in article five, verse 1, Raja Ali Haji said, "If you want to know a nation, look through its people's mind and language." This fact indicates that Raja Ali Haji, as a scholar, a culturist, a writer, a historian, and an Islamic expert, views the refined attitude of great importance to human beings [4]. However, the view of refined attitude in his work has not attracted the attention of researchers and scholars so far. Instead, a number of studies on his work focused on the fields of religion, linguistics, history, political governance, and literature.

This study is imperative as it is in accordance with the education policy in Indonesia. Since 2010, the Government of the Republic of Indonesia, under the Ministry of National Education, has re-implemented character education starting from primary education to higher education levels. With that character education, the education program is expected to implement it comprehensively by integrating social skills, one's nature, character, and love towards one's culture and love towards the Indonesian language with a goal to allow education institutions to boost the output of students who are capable of meeting the needs of qualified human resources. In this way, education development materials need to be drafted in accordance with the vision of Indonesian National Education [5].

National education policy emphasizes that cultural values need to be developed at any educational institution so that learners are not deprived of their cultural roots. To support the program, the works of Raja Ali Haji are very relevant to be studied, which in turn can be developed into the character education learning materials. This is due to the works of Raja Ali Haji generally which contains noble values of character that are generally adopted from Islamic teachings [6].

*Budi* (Character) is a term derived from Sanskrit, which is rooted from the feminine word *Budh*. Although the concept of *budi* is derived from Sanskrit word that contains Hindu philosophical values, in Malay culture, the concept has been modified. This is because Malay culture is attached to the teachings of Islam in which the values of Islam are the main reference in the concept of personal character within Malay-Muslim culture. Bukhari al-Jauhari elaborates the concept of *budi* in his work of *Taj al-Salatin* [7]. His elaboration can be summarized into fourteen characteristics, among others; the character is an entity that is closest to God. It is the origin of all

truth shown by Allah. It emits lights of truth to the entire human body; its presence differentiates between good and bad; it brings self-perfection, human actions and compulsory elements within human beings so as to prevent them from getting bad lucks.

The heart, where budi originally stems from, is derived from an Arabic word. There are some words in Arabic that refer to the definition of 'heart' in Indonesian with deep layers of meanings. The first layer is the word "qalb" which means the outest dimension of the heart. The second layer is the word "fuad" which is defined as the dimension of the heart which refers to minds with intellectual intelligent potentials. The third layer is the word "tsaqafah" which is defined as the dimension of the heart with spiritual intelligence. The last one is the word "lubb" that contains all intellectual intelligence and spiritual intelligence. It is the deepest dimension of the heart is "sirr" which entails the deepest spiritual secrets [8]. The relationship between heart and its layers which produces personal character is shown in the figure 1.

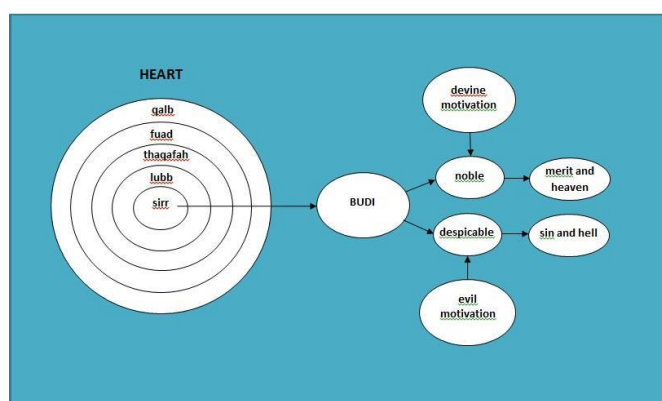


Fig. 1. The relationship between the Heart and Budi [9].

As shown in Figure 1, a good character which brings glory stems from God-oriented desire. In the meantime, a bad character which produces contempt stems from evil-oriented desire. Etymologically speaking, the phrase *budi pekerti* is defined as 'self-righteous behavior or appearance' [10]. Based on ethics or moral philosophy approaches, the character is someone's disposition or someone's particular nature in showing polite acts and respects to others as reflected in his/her behavior and life. Disposition is an overall support of character, attitudes, decision, habits and good moral values in a person which is terminologically called as a virtue [11].

To analyze character indexes to the people, this research applies a semiotic theory. Semiotics is the study of a sign system. This field of study has been a tradition since the Greek Stoics era [12]. Semiotics is the theory of a sign being communicated. This theory is commonly used in various disciplines. Two pioneering figures of semiotics are Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce. The semiotic study looks at objects or behaviors as a parole (speech behavior) of a langue (language: the linguistic system), which provides the foundation of its grammar analysis [13].

Based on the characteristics of a sign, van Zoest makes a conclusion that everything can be considered as a sign as long

as it can build a triangular relationship with a *ground*, a *denotatum*, and an *interpretant* [14]. According to Peirce, a sign "is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity." He names something that is used to make a sign functions as 'ground'. Consequently, a sign or *representamen* is always contained in the triadic relationship: ground, object, and *interpretant* [15,16]. Therefore, this study examines one issue i.e. the values which are related to character indexes to the people in the works of Raja Ali Haji.

## II. METHOD

From the twenty works of Raja Ali Haji [17], only five works selected to be analyzed in this study. These five works are (1) *Syair Abdul Muluk* [9], (2) *Gurindam Dua Belas* [3], (3) *Tsamarat al-Muhimmah* [18,19], (4) *Tuhfat al-Nafis* [20], and (5) *Syair Sinar Gemala Mustika Alam* [21]. The study is classified as descriptive qualitative research. The data of the research were collected and analyzed using the content analysis technique. Content analysis is a study conducted to determine the presence of words or certain concepts in a text or set of texts [22]. In this study, the presence of meaning and the relationship of words with the concepts of morality were analyzed. Then, conclusions related to the message contained in the works of Raja Ali Haji were drawn.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In its relationship with the people, the works of Raja Ali Haji propose everyone to glorify his/her guests. In this case, people who receive guests should glorify their guests. The character index to glorify guests can be found in SAM, among others, in verse 39. Here are the excerpts of the verse.

*Oleh saudagar dipermuliakan*  
(Be glorified by a merchant)  
*Disuruhnya duduk di atas hamparan*  
(He was told to sit on a carpet)  
*Segala dagangan dilihat sekalian*  
(All merchandise is being seen)  
*Berjenis-jenis kassah dan kattan*  
(Different types of gauze and cotton)

The above verse tells the story of a Barbarian merchant who received his guest, a merchant from Hindustan, named Bahauddin, whose name was none other than the uncle of the Hindustan Sultan, Sultan Syihabuddin. The arrival of the guest to the Barbarian country, especially to the Barbarian merchant's house, was welcomed very well and glorified by the Barbarian merchant. The glory and honor are symbolized by the welcoming act showed by the Barbarian merchant to his guest, Bahauddin, to sit on a carpet.

In Malay civilization, one of the symbols of the host honoring his guest(s) is by welcoming the guest(s) well, which among other things, provides the best seat that is owned by the host. In addition, the best drinks and meals must be provided, according to the ability of the host. Those are done by the host to glorify his guest(s) and to establish a friendship between them, which in turn creates a good impression. On the basis of that honor and glory, the above verse of SAM uses a symbol of

a carpet which is provided by the Barbarian merchant as a place for his guest, a draper from Hindustan.

A warm welcome for his guest is a marker of his refinement in his relationship with the people, i.e. his guest. That means the glory given by the host to his guest is actually a reflection of the glory of the host himself. His goodness is not only enjoyed by his guest but even more, will be transmitted to the host himself. All of them also come from the teachings of the Prophet which become the core of Malay civilization.

The work of TAN also states the message of honoring guests. It can be found on 2nd paragraph, page 184 and on 1st paragraph, page 185 of the work. The following is the excerpt.

“So, it happened that, when the discussion is finished, Raja Haji and his Majesty Raja Sa’id and Suliwatang also sailed to Kedah. So, Engku Kelana stopped in Perak was about to meet Sultan Perak. Then he was glorified and served by Sultan Perak to eat and drink. Then after a day in Perak, he asked for permission to Sultan Perak and the Majesty Sultan Selangor.

Sultan Selangor asked him to stay in Perak for a while because it was not necessary for the Majesty to fight,” [23].

The above quote is a story about Raja Haji (Kelana or Deputy Sultan of the Sultanate of Riau-Lingga-Johor-Pahang) and Sultan Selangor visiting Kedah. Before arriving in Kedah, they stopped in Perak. Arriving in Perak, they were glorified and treated by Sultan Perak.

From the work of Raja Ali Haji which is quoted above, it can be concluded that the behavior of glorifying the guests in social life is noble and commendable according to the Malay-Islamic civilization. The person who glorifies the guests means he has a noble character. The reason is that he has done a commendable deed according to the Malay-Islamic civilization.

The twenty-one character indexes were found in the works of Raja Ali Haji. The indexes can be seen in Table 1.

TABLE I. CHARACTER INDEXES TO THE PEOPLE IN THE WORKS OF RAJA ALI HAJI

No	Indexes	The Works of Raja Ali Haji				
		SAM	GDB	TAN	TAM	SGMA
1	Honoring guests	Verse 39	-	Pages 184-185	-	-
2	Thorough and vigilant	Verses 42-53	Article VII, verse 3	-	-	-
3	Honest	Verses 48-77	Article VIII, verse 1-2	Page 164	-	-
4	Upholding customs/ Obeying the law	Verses 66-67	-	-	-	-
5	Working together/ Helping each other	Verses 91-92	-	Page 291	-	-
6	Feeling mutual sorrow	Verses 150-151; 440	-	-	-	-
7	Respecting others	Verse 203	-	-	-	-
8	Maintaining harmony	Verses 285-292	-	-	-	-
9	Defending the community	Verses 587-592	-	-	-	-
10	Willing to sacrifice	Verses 603-604	Article XI, verse 1	-	-	-
11	Loving each other	Verses 890-905	-	-	-	-
12	Considerate	Verse 1.715	-	-	-	-
13	Open to criticism	-	Article IV, verse 10	-	-	-
14	Good socializing	-	Article V, verse 6	-	-	-
15	Does not like to criticize people	-	Article VII, verse 5	-	-	-
16	Does not open people's disgrace	-	Article VIII, verse 7	-	-	-
17	Being fair to friends	-	Article X, verse 5	-	-	-
18	Does not distinguish people's dignity	-	-	-	Page 23	-
19	Deliberation and consensus	-	-	-	Page 28	-
20	Charity	-	-	Pages 302-303	-	-
21	Invites to do good	-	-	-	-	Page 132

Table 1 presents twenty-one character indexes to the people found in the works of Raja Ali Haji. The indexes include (1) honoring guests, (2) thorough and vigilant, (3) honest, (4) upholding customs/ obeying the law, (5) working together/ helping, (6) feeling mutual sorrow, (7) respecting others, (8) maintaining harmony, (9) defending the community, (10) willing to sacrifice, (11) loving each other, (12) considerate, (13) open to criticism, (14) good socializing, (15) does not like to criticize people, (16) does not open people's disgrace, (17) being fair to friends, (18) does not distinguish people's dignity, (19) deliberation and consensus, (20) charity, and (21) invites to do good. Therefore, those twenty-one values (indexes) should be in every person who has noble character. The work of Raja Ali Haji, i.e. GDB, can be implemented to forming good character in all aspects of living [24].

From Table 1, it can also be seen that not all the works of Raja Ali Haji contain certain indexes. In this case, the index of glorifies the guests, for example, contained in SAM and TAN, but not in GDB, TAM, and SGMA. Even so, every text (work) that describes a particular index, such as glorifies the guests, gives an explanation of the index. Thus, the importance of the index described is more understandable to the reader. As a result, the message is more touching the readers' thoughts and feelings.

Based upon the analysis, it can be summed up that each work of Raja Ali Haji discusses different matters and contain different indexes. Those twenty-one character indexes are compiled from those five works. The works of Raja Ali Haji contain comprehensive character values for character building [25]. In another word, those works do not only contain some character indexes to the people, but also to oneself, to family, to other creatures, to the Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*), to God, and to leader.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The works of Raja Ali Haji contain twenty-one character indexes to the people. Thus, people who have those twenty-one character indexes to the people are classified as human beings who have good or noble character. The works of Raja Ali Haji have proven to contain noble characters which are highly upheld in the culture of the Indonesian nation and the Malay World in general. It means that the works of Raja Ali Haji can and should be used as a learning material for character education and literary education to strengthen the character of the Indonesian people, especially the younger generation. In fact, because the value is universal, the character values expressed by Raja Ali Haji can also be referred to by all people in the world to be used as a way of life.

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