

THE CONCEPT OF *TAZKIYAH AL-NAFS* IN THE FEMALE CHARACTER IN THE NOVEL *THE MISSING PIECE*

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse the elements of *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the soul) in the novel *The Missing Piece: Part One* and *Part Two*. In general, character studies discuss three important aspects, one of which is the spiritual. In this study, the researcher will lay emphasis on the message of spirituality depicted by the author through the female character in the novel. This spiritual message can be traced in the elements of spiritual purification (*tazkiyah al-nafs*). In the novel *The Missing Piece*, elements of *tazkiyah al-nafs* will be classified in terms of two relationships; the relationship of humans with Allah (*habl min Allah*) and the relationship of human beings with one another (*habl min al-nas*). Based on this concept of *tazkiyah al-nafs*, the female character in the novel *The Missing Piece* in both parts one and two, can be seen to convey a number of spiritual messages that make up aspects of female personality in Islam. This includes aspects of *aqidah* (creed) and *ibadah* (worship) in line with spiritual concepts and suggestions for the process of the purification of the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*). The potential of women authors in the field of Islamic

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spirituality needs to be given attention, apart from emphasizing moral issues and the quality of female characters. This can also be seen as an effort to elevate women's writing to be on par with the men's; it can, in fact, make women's writing a guide for the formation of an exceptional *ummah* (Islamic community).

Keywords: *Tazkiyah al-nafs*, female characters, women's writing, relationship of humans with Allah, relationship of humans with one another.

Introduction

Malay Literature is an imaginative creation covering a wide and varied area. Since the time of the ancient Greeks and Romans, literature has been said to have its own attraction, inviting readers to explore it. Its attraction includes depth of feeling and thought that are sophisticatedly interwoven, and which invites the reader to think critically and creatively about whatever messages a writer tries to convey in his work (Sohaimi Abdul Aziz, 1998:1). As works of art, novels have their own patterns. Apart from presenting social issues, literary works also function as alternative means of spreading the Islamic faith. This function as conveyors of the Islamic faith is not a new phenomenon; in fact, it dates back to the 16th and 17th centuries. Beginning from the era in which the Malay language became the *lingua franca* of the region, written works have been an alternative method of spreading the Islamic faith (Nazariyah Sani, 2005:3). The Qur'an states in the *Surah at-Taubah*, verse 105, that in Islam, writing is an occupation that plays a role in enriching and delighting the lives of human beings. After dominating the field of publication at the beginning of the 20th century, the Malay novel is once again showing a positive change. This positive change has led to the realization among both male and female writers of the importance of Islamic elements. Islamic elements are once again forming the basis for a society that is becoming increasingly modernized.

Among the women writers who interest the researches is Fatimah Busu. Fatimah Busu is a prolific veteran writer who has been a feature in the literature of the country for 41 years. This former lecturer from Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) is a productive writer

who displays her creativity in each and every one of her works. She is also inclined to try new approaches when writing her novels and short stories, apart from presenting ideas and issues that concern women. Not only does she deal with issues of moral values and dilemmas that women are faced with in their lives, but also the struggles and roles that a Muslim woman faces in her personal life. This is what will be examined in this study. The method employed will be an analysis using the elements of *tazkiyah al-nafs*. The concept of *tazkiyah al-nafs* or purification of the soul will be applied in order to discuss the Islamic messages that affect the female character in *The Missing Piece: Part One* and *Part Two*. This method is thought to be able to aid in evaluating accurately the subject that the writer wishes to bring into focus. Further, this study will try to prove the potential of women writers in discussing more serious issues, such as the issue of Islamic spirituality, in their works.

Female Characters from the Dominant Perspective

Based on the researchers observations, there has been a great number of studies on female characters with a variety of focuses. However, little attention has been paid to the Islamic elements of Malay female characters, whereas this elucidation is important as it influences the unique personality of a Malay woman in these modern times. This is also mentioned by Siti Hajar Che Man (2007:94) who states that too much research has been done on works produced by women. She points out that, on the average, too much of this research focuses on issues that are somewhat bland and do not challenge the minds of women. The focus is mostly themes and issues, historical research, sociocultural development, creativity, and women's activity and inactivity in writing. The aspects studied in these researches show that previous researchers were mostly unidirectional in their thinking and leaned more towards contemporary themes and issues. Therefore, it can be observed that many of the studies done on literature and women's involvement in writing overlap and, in essence, discuss the same thing.

Apart from this, it cannot be denied that women's movements are active today. Among the issues they focus on is gender equality (*Harian Metro*, March 2010). Therefore, it is not surprising that this affected studies on women in literature. The focus of such studies

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is to elevate the status of women in all aspects of life with the aim of showing the best models for women. This is reflected in Sharifah Zaleha Syed Hassan (1993:141), who states that at the beginning of the 20th century, discussions about women in literature centred on only two matters. Firstly, concerning moral worth, and secondly concerning the qualities of the women themselves. However, consciously or not, these studies in effect have reduced the room for traditional Malay cultural values and Islamic values as a result of the impact of feminist ideas. Norazit Selat (1991:81) has said that,

Malay women are confined by strict cultural and religious rules. Culture and religion emphasize the “natural” role of women in terms of reproductive and household production.

(Norazit Selat, 1991:81)

This brief quotation explains why Malay culture and Islam are abandoned. Malay women are said to be limited by strict religious and cultural rules. Culture and religion are said to emphasize the natural roles of women in the household. However, this can be refuted because Islam does not limit women’s freedom. In fact, women are free to enter any fields in their lives as long as these do not overstep the bounds of religion and culture. Still, in line with developments that introduce new treatments in displaying maturity and freedom from traditional spheres, women writers have also been drawn towards elements of freedom in the field of writing. This is touched on by the late Shahnnon Ahmad (1981:99), who stated that the creative powers bestowed by Allah SWT are modified through new meanings. For example, the status of women, with all its purity and decency, has been “prostituted” by new meanings such as women’s emancipation, women’s rights and equality. These new meanings have also dimmed the continuity of the *dakwah* movement of the 1970s, which fought to bring realization regarding the importance of the fact that the female character should be maintained in accordance with what is stated explicitly and implicitly in the Qur’an and *Sunnah* (Sharifah Zaleha Syed Hassan, 1993:141).

Therefore, studies of female characters should give more emphasis on Islamic aspects. Proving this potential should be given attention in an effort to elevate the status of women’s works to the level of men’s works. This was one of the items brought up in the

dialogue titled “*Dialog Orang Muda (DOM) Penulis Wanita: Antara Idealisme dan Realiti*” which was conducted at the Rumah Pena on 16 October 2010. Among the items brought up on this occasion were the abilities of women writers, and the suggestions to raise more significant issues other than sexuality. As such, focusing on the moral values and efforts to raise the status of women can be seen as projecting the abilities of women writers on the same level as the men’s, and thus form continuity. This has also been mentioned by Siti Hajar Che Man (2007:94), who states that most studies concerning literature and women’s involvement overlap and are, in essence, similar. As a result, the discussion of this study will emphasize on a new perspective in producing works that will contribute to a realization based on an Islamic pattern.

Tazkiyah al-Nafs

Tazkiyah al-nafs means purification of the self or soul. The key words are *tazkiyah* and *nafs*. *Tazkiyah* has its origins in *zakka-yuzzaki-tazkiyah*, which means the same as *tathir*, which itself comes from the root *thahhara-yuthahhiru-tathir(ah)* meaning cleansing or purification. *Al-nafs* is a word with multiple meanings. According to an Arabic-language dictionary, *nafs* is often translated as self, body, soul, spirit or the heart (Atabik Ali & Ahmad Zuhdi Mudlor, 1996:496). However, the concept *tazkiyah al-nafs* as discussed here will not be looked at from its dictionary meanings. The concept of *tazkiyah al-nafs* referred here is the concept of purification as dictated in the Qur’an. In the Qur’an, *tazkiyah al-nafs* has been interpreted in several ways. Firstly, it means cleansing oneself from disbelief. With reference to verse 2 of *Surah al-Jumu’ah*, *tazkiyah al-nafs* can be interpreted as cleansing oneself from *najis* (filth) and disbelief. Secondly, the meaning of *tazkiyah al-nafs* can be explained in reference to *Surah ash-Shams*, verse 9, which can be translated to mean “Truly he succeeds he that purifies it “his soul.” Furthermore, according to verse 74 of *Surah al-Kahf*, it can be translated as “an innocent person.” Finally, verse 76 of *Surah Thaha*, refers to “those who purify themselves from evil.” From these verses, it clearly shows that the values contained in the concept of *tazkiyah* can be seen as dynamic agents of cleansing in order to cleanse the human body and soul through a spiritual method. Apart from this, it also cleanses

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the network in which human beings operate, whether this is among human beings or involving human interaction with Allah, the world and the rest of His creation. This then is the concept of *tazkiyah*, also known as *tazkiyah al-nafs* in academic studies. The term refers to the cleansing of the human soul which encompasses external and internal aspects in the efforts of human beings to submit to Allah SWT (Shuhairimi Abdullah, 2009:64).

To analyse this issue, the researchers refer to the views of al-Ghazali (2000:15), who also deals with the concept of *tazkiyah al-nafs* as envisioned in Islam. According to al-Ghazali (1998:27), there are a number of elements that need to be combined to form the basic framework of the concept *tazkiyah al-nafs* as required by Islamic law. The elements are as follows:

| | | |
|----|--|---|
| 1. | <i>Taharah</i> (purification) | Cleansing one's inner self from behaviour that is considered bad and evil according to Islamic law. Cleansing one's inner self from focusing on anything other than Allah SWT. |
| 2. | <i>Salah</i> (prayer) | Cleansing the soul from arrogance before Allah and reminding the soul to follow His decrees. |
| 3. | <i>Zakat</i> (Alms-giving) | Cleansing the soul from miserliness and reminding all humans that the true owner of all riches is Allah. |
| 4. | Reading the Qur'an | Reminding the soul of several perfections. |
| 5. | <i>Ridha</i> (Contentment) | One of the purest values that should be understood by all humans. Through it, human beings will become more patient and accept whatever challenges Allah SWT may put in their lives. |
| 6. | <i>Amar Makruf Nahi Mungkar</i> (Enjoin good, forbid evil) | A method that will strengthen what is right and eliminate what is evil. |

It is clear then that the concept of *tazkiyah al-nafs* refers to a process of purification of the soul through elements that link humans to their Creator. Based on the work under study, the meaning of *tazkiyah al-nafs*, as discussed above, will be employed to refer to the acts of purification of the soul in the relationship between humans and Allah (*habl min Allah*), and between human and human (*habl min al-nas*).

***Tazkiyah al-Nafs* in the Relationship of Humans with Allah (*Habl min Allah*)**

The relationship of humans with Allah SWT is an interaction that is linked to *ibadah* (worship). According to Sidi Gazalba (1982:139), maintaining the relationship with Allah is the basic responsibility of all humans. This can be seen in verse 112 of *Surah Ali Imran*, whose meaning is translated as:

“Shame is pitched over them (like a tent) wherever they are found, except when under a covenant (of protection) from Allah and from men”

(*Ali Imran*:112)

This verse clearly calls on human beings to maintain their relationship with Allah (*hablun min Allah*) and with other human beings (*habl min al-nas*). When human beings neglect this responsibility, they will experience physical and spiritual hardship. Sidi Gazalba further says that this is based on the evidence that Allah merely created human beings so that they would submit to Him (1982:3). The expression often used for “submission” is *ibadah* (worship). *Ibadah* is submission which a large number of Muslims associate with the pillars of Islam. These pillars teach steadfastness and submission, to the extent that both these elements become habits and create *taqwa* (God-consciousness) within a person (Sidi Gazalba, 1982:3). In analysing the novel *The Missing Piece*, it can be seen that the author has employed the concept of *taqwa* alongside the concept of purification of the soul in her female characters. Among the concepts that lead to the purification of the soul are *salah*, *zakat*, *ridha* and reading Qur’an, as will be discussed below.

(1) Performing *salah*

The research shows that the character of Imrah is depicted as a character who performs *salah* regularly. Even though she is stressed by all kinds of dilemmas and pressures in her life, Imrah is depicted as someone who does not neglect this responsibility. Her faith in worshipping Allah SWT can be seen through this description of her inner being:

Tetapi aku diciptakan oleh Allah SWT sebagai manusia. Bukan binatang. Bukan pokok dan makhluk yang lain, jin, setan dan iblis. Manusia adalah makhluk yang tertinggi darjatnya. Khalifah di muka bumi. Diberikan akal dan fikiran. Diberikan kewajipan! Tanggungjawab! Dan sembahyang itu tiang agama Islam. Dan kalau aku tidak sembahyang, di manakah agamaku? Kalau aku tidak patuh kepada perintah Allah, apa ertinya Islamku?

But I have been created by Allah SWT as a human being. Not an animal. Not a tree or any other creation, such as jinn, Satan or the devil. Human beings are the highest of creations, the vicegerents on earth. We are given a mind and intellect. Duties! Responsibilities! And prayer is a pillar of Islam. And if I do not pray, where is my faith? If I do not obey Allah, what does Islam mean to me?

(Fatimah Busu, *The Missing Piece: Part Two*, 2008:432–33)

Based on this excerpt, the woman's sense of her responsibility as Allah's servant is clear. This realization of her responsibility shows the author's sensitivity in creating a character reflecting the true nature of a (*khalifah*) vicegerent. This is what should be stressed on and discussed in women's writings to show that women do give emphasis to Islamic aspects in their works. Faith and love for Allah SWT are elements that must be given attention in giving a new justification to female characters in the field of contemporary Malay literature.

Displays of worship such as shown by the author in her work also clearly show that Islam is a religion that leads its followers to the road of goodness and glory. This, then, refutes the view that Malay women are confined by a restrictive culture and religion. Society should be exposed to this so that they will be aware that a perfect

character is not the result of an accumulation of modernisation but comes about as a result of the interaction of humans with their Creator (*habl min Allah*). As outlined in the concept of *tazkiyah al-nafs*, the effect obtained by fostering *tazkiyah* can be witnessed with one's eyes, tongue, ears, hands, feet and intellect. The most obvious effect on someone whose heart has been purified can be seen through a person's good characteristics before Allah SWT (Zuridan Mohd Daud, 2010:28). This can be clearly observed through Imrah's actions which continuously seek help and guidance from Allah SWT through worship in order to achieve well-being in her life. This can be seen in the following excerpt:

Aku sembahyang zuhur. Aku sembahyang sunat Istiqarah. "Tuhanku!" kataku, "aku mohon petunjuk dari-Mu. Sekiranya Engkau tentukan jodohku dengan Charlie masih panjang, putihkanlah hatiku yang hitam ini ... aku berserah kepada Allah SWT.

I perform the *zuhur* prayer. I perform the *sunnah Istiqarah* prayer. "Dear God!" I say, "I ask for a sign from You. If You may grant me a lasting match with Charlie, whiten my black heart ... I submit to You, O Allah SWT.

(Fatimah Busu, *The Missing Piece: Part Two*, 2008:434–35)

Based on this excerpt, it is clear that the interaction between humans and Allah SWT (*habl min Allah*) is depicted as an effective method of psychological therapy to heal all anxieties and any kind of stress that are faced by a woman. Hence, performing the *Salah* shows that there is an interaction between humans and Allah SWT. This interaction will also bring about the purification of the souls of women, and prevent them from committing anything that is based on pure emotion. Muhammad Utsman Najati (2005:281) is also of this view, as he says that when someone stands and bows in prayer before Allah SWT in full concentration, he will be given a spiritual strength that will bring to his soul purity, relief and tranquillity.

(2) Giving *zakat*

The giving of *zakat* is the fourth pillar of Islam and is compulsory for

each Muslim individual, male or female, who meets the requirements. Apart from this, in verse 9 of *Surah ash-Shams* it is stated that *zakat* will cleanse the soul and bring about a positive attitude in society. Therefore, *zakat* also contributes to promoting the values of *tazkiyah al-nafs* in one's life. This can be proven through the verses of *Surah ash-Shams* which can be translated as follows:

“Truly he succeeds that purifies it, and he fails that corrupts it.”

(*ash-Shams*: 9–10)

The process of purification of the soul mentioned in this verse is exactly what Imam al-Ghazali calls *tazkiyah al-nafs*. This is in line with the opinions of Salleh Yaapar (2002:63), who says that one of the main things in Muslim society is literature that reflects a *tauhid* in life and leads towards the cleansing of the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*). In the novel *The Missing Piece: Part Two*, for example, Fatimah Busu shows Imrah giving *zakat* to a single mother. Imrah's actions are in line with the responsibility of Muslim women. This can be seen in the following excerpt:

Pada pertengahan bulan Ramadan, aku pun memberikan wang zakat kepada Saidah Nafsiah. RM1000 zakat wang Lawrence. RM1000 zakat wang Charlie. Aku tambah dengan wang sedekahku sendiri sebanyak RM500.00. Jadi RM2500 semuanya.

In the middle of Ramadan, I gave *zakat* to Saidah Nafsiah. RM1000 *zakat* from Lawrence. RM1000 *zakat* from Charlie. I added a bit of my own money, RM500.00. So it came up to RM2500 in all.

(Fatimah Busu, *The Missing Piece: Part Two*, 2008:725)

Through this excerpt, the author shows that giving *zakat* is a responsibility for women as well. Also shown is that Imrah pays *zakat* on behalf of her late husbands. Muhammad Ali al-Allawi (2010:326) states that according to Islamic laws, the wife of the deceased is responsible for managing her husband's property and that her actions will be rewarded by Allah. This statement is supported by verse 7 of *Surah al-Hadid* where Allah SWT says:

“Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and spend (in charity) out of the (substance) whereof He has made you heirs. For, those of you who believe and spend (in charity),- for them is a great Reward.”

(*al-Hadid: 7*)

In the novel, *The Missing Piece*, Fatimah Busu shows the responsibility of *zakat* for women. This is in line with the principles of *tazkiyah al-nafs* where the purification of the soul is an important part of literature in this modern trend. Apart from this, the researcher finds that the author’s combination of sociocultural reality of women and the concept of women in Islam leans towards realization of building the spiritual character of her readers. Salleh Yaapar (2002:63) is of the same view, as he says that *tazkiyyah al-nafs* should be accepted in a positive manner when it is linked to the creative process. This is because literary works that contain suggestions for the purification of the soul will lead to a tawhidic view in life and create an exceptional *ummah*.

(3) *Ridha* with the fate ordained by Allah

Ridha (contentment) means accepting with an open heart one’s fate as ordained by Allah SWT, whether good or bad. In this matter, there are two levels of *ridha*, as explained by Zulkifli Mohamad al-Bakri (2009:87):

- (i) *ridha* in accepting the laws of Allah SWT as a duty given to humankind.
- (ii) *ridha* in accepting the fate Allah has ordained for a person.

Ridha in accepting the laws of Allah originates from a perfection of *iman* (faith), a steadfastness of *taqwa* and loyalty to Allah SWT. To this end, the author depicts Imrah as a character who is assailed by all kinds of challenges in looking for “the missing piece” in her life. This is something that is a reality in the lives of all humans on earth. However, as a Malay Muslim woman, Imrah never blames the fate that has been ordained for her. A good woman, in Islam, is a woman who genuinely obeys all His decrees. This obedience and loyalty to Allah SWT will be tested with all kinds of trials and

tribulations as He thinks fit. This can be seen in verses 2–3 of *Surah al-Ankabut*:

“Do men think that they will be left alone on saying ‘We believe’, and that they will not be tested? We did test those before them and Allah will certainly know those who are true from those who are false.”

(*al-Ankabut*:2–3)

In *The Missing Piece*, Fatimah Busu also shows that Imrah is a character who always accepts her fate. Imrah never blames God for the challenges that she faces in life. Her *taqwa* and *iman* make Imrah a person strong enough to face her fate. Fatimah Busu shows this in the following excerpt:

Aku pun melepaskan pergi keduniaan ini dengan kedua-dua belah tanganku. Redha dan tulus. Warna-warna dunia mulai terpadam. Satu demi satu.

I let go of this world with both hands. Full of *ridha* and sincerity. The colours of this world slowly dimmed. One by one.

(Fatimah Busu, *The Missing Piece*:
Part Two, 2008:729)

This excerpt shows Imrah’s acceptance of her fate. The phrase *warna-warna dunia mulai terpadam* (the colours of this world slowly dimmed) can be associated with the interaction between humans and Allah. A woman who has a sincere relationship with her Creator will not think it a burden to leave the pleasures of this world in order to achieve happiness in the afterlife. In the Qur’an, it is stated that anyone who accepts the fate ordained for him by Allah SWT will be given guidance in life. Evidence for this can be found in verses 155–56 of *Surah al-Baqarah*:

“... but We give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere; who says, when afflicted with calamity: To Allah we belong, and to Him we return”

(*al-Baqarah*:155 –156)

Based on the interpretation of the verse given above, it is clear that patience is a virtue that is a requirement in Islam in order to lead

the soul towards goodness. However, in the opinion of Muhammad Ali al-Allawi (2010:287), many women are restless and impatient when they encounter ill fortune. They will perform actions that go against the laws of Islam and express words that may lead them towards hell and retribution. This is also seen in the works of male writers who depict female characters who go mad as a result of the tribulations they face in life. In *The Missing Piece*, however, the author depicts the elements of *ridha* and patience as elements of the female character when she faces difficulties. Imrah's character does not become mad when she is tested by Allah with great trials but is shown to remain sane based on this concept of *ridha*. This can be seen as an effort towards a new signification in women's writings. Islamic ideas that lead towards purification of the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*) can be seen as being effective methods in giving greater status to female characters.

(4) Reading Qur'an

The Qur'an is a miracle, a book of guidance, a differentiator between what is good and what is wrong and what is most honourable in the sight of Allah SWT. It was revealed to the most honourable of Prophets, Muhammad SAW, through the most honourable of angels (*Jibril*), and the most honourable of places (Makkah), on the most honourable night (*Lailatul-Qadr*, the night of honour), in the most honourable month (*Ramadhan*) and the most honourable of languages (Arabic), (Muhd Yusuf Ahmad, 2005:153). All these make the activity of reading, learning and teaching the Qur'an very special and those who read it will be rewarded manifold by Allah SWT. This is affirmed by Allah SWT in *Surah al-Isra*, verse 9:

“Verily this Qur'an doth guide to that which is most right (or stable), and giveth the glad tidings to the Believers who work deeds of righteousness, that they shall have a Magnificent reward.”

(*al-Isra*:9)

Based on the above interpretation, it is clear that the Qur'an is a resource that will lead humans to the path of Allah. In *The Missing Piece*, Imrah is seen to make reading the Qur'an a guide to lead a life along the path approved by Allah. Imrah is shown by

the author to be a woman who constantly refers to the teachings of her faith as a guide in her life. She can be seen as a woman with an Islamic character as her faith in Allah SWT remains unshakeable even though she is tested not only with all kinds of tribulations and but also rewards. This can be observed from the following excerpt:

Kalau tidak ke mana-mana, waktu dua puluh empat jam sehari aku penuh dengan berhandai-handai dengan Lawrence. Aku mula membaca Al-Quran Al-Karim Pemimpin Al-Rahman yang aku beli di Kedai Buku Ko-operatif USM lama dulu.

If not going anywhere, I would spend twenty-four hours a day with Lawrence. I began reading the Qur'an that I had bought at the USM Co-op Bookstore a long time ago.

(Fatimah Busu, *The Missing Piece: Part Two*, 2008:48)

The excerpt shows that the strength of Imrah's lifestyle as a Muslim is reflected as she puts religion at the forefront of all her daily activities. This is another important aspect that has special significance and needs to be emphasized in women's writing. Yusuf al-Qardawi (1995:51) has said that the Qur'an states that married life must be based on a strong foundation which is based on calmness, love and sympathy. This excerpt is thus proof that reading the Qur'an, as practiced by Imrah, can be categorized as a source of calm, love and sympathy as required in building a happy married life. This is further supported by the Islamic concept mentioned in the Qur'an, whereby women are not the enemies or competitors of men but they mutually complement each other (Yusuf al-Qardawi, 1995:52). *The Missing Piece* shows that Imrah makes efforts to complement her husband's knowledge through knowledge gleaned from the Qur'an. This is shown in the following excerpt:

Waduh, adinda tahu sampai sejauh itu, ya?

Dulu-dulu adinda selalu baca berulang-ulang. Dinda jumpa buku dalam perpustakaan. Dinda Xerox lima helai. Termasuk keterangan tentang jumlah surah-surah dalam al-Quran sebanyak 114 surah, ayatnya berjumlah 6666. Ada 30 juz semuanya. Ketika ayat akhir itu diturunkan, Nabi sedang melakukan Haji Wida, Hajinya yang akhir.

Ah sekarang barulah jelas. Nanti kalau ada orang bertanya, tahulah kanda menjawabnya. Terima kasih, adindaku.

My dear, do you really know all that?

You used to read it over and over, darling. You found a book in the library. You photocopied five pages. Including an explanation that the total number of *surah* in the Qur'an is 114 and its verses total 6666. There are 30 *juz'* in all. When the last verse was revealed, the Prophet was performing his final hajj.

Ah, now it is clear. When someone asks, I will be able to answer it. Thank you, darling.

(Fatimah Busu, *The Missing Piece: Part One*, 2005:529)

Based on the above excerpt, it is clear that the author wishes to elevate the religious nature of the female character. The Islamic elements are emphasized and served to create a great female character. The greatness of women is not necessarily measured in terms of political, economic or social aspects but also include religious aspects. This is depicted by Fatimah Busu through her female character, Imrah, who is able to gain knowledge from understanding the Qur'an. Salleh Yaapar (2002:63) opines that the kind of literature suitable for Muslims is literature that reflects a tauhidic view of life. This tauhidic view of life can further be seen in the efforts towards a purification of the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*).

***Tazkiyyah al-Nafs* in the Relationship between Human Beings (*Habl min al-Nas*)**

The relationship between human beings is mentioned in the Qur'an, as exemplified by verse 13 of *Surah al-Hujurat*:

O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah is well-acquainted (with all things).

(*al-Hujurat*:13)

The translation of the given verse shows that human beings are encouraged to create a harmonious society in order to reap the benefits of such a system. However, the relationship between human beings does not merely refer to the relationship of one human with another, but also love for oneself (Sidi Gazalba, 1982:117). Love for oneself is the starting point for forming values in oneself that will enable one to love other individuals. In making this a harmonious relationship, the strength of *iman* is necessary to create a feeling of brotherhood in one's relationship with other human beings and all of society (Muhammad Utsman Najat, 2005:79).

In this context, the relationship of human beings with one another is a connection that is based on a display of understanding and harmony. At this level, the element of *taharah* (a human spiritual harmony) as contained in the concept of *tazkiyah al-nafs*, can be seen. This harmony refers to the need of every Muslim individual to display praiseworthy characteristics such as patience, tolerance, co-operation, and love that will lead towards an Islamic lifestyle. *The Missing Piece* shows that Imrah is a praiseworthy character as evidenced in her relationship with her husband, children and society around her. Her character leans towards the process of purification of the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*) in an effort to form an exceptional female character in the novel.

(1) Woman and her spouse

According to Rabi'ah Sarnap (1999:5), Islam has never made assumptions of women as "tools of the devil"; the Qur'an refers to women as *muhsana*, that is, a barrier against the temptations of Satan. This is in reference to women who are wives. A woman who marries a man will aid her husband in making his *iman* steadfast in order that he may go down the path of truth and righteousness his whole life. Apart from this, a good wife is also a wife who can bring her husband happiness in all situations (Hadith narrated by al-Nasa'i). In a woman's relationship with her husband, there are a number of elements that are emphasized by the author which are in line with the requirements for the purification of the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*) in maintaining the relationship between husband and wife as required in Islam. This also needs to be seen as an

element to be emphasized when looking at women's writing from an Islamic point of view.

The first aspect is that of a wife's loyalty. A Muslim woman knows that Islam gives great rewards to a loyal wife (Muhammad Ali al-Hashimi, 2006:228). In the novel *The Missing Piece*, it can be seen that the author brings out this element of loyalty in the character of Imrah. The loyalty of a wife can be seen when Imrah loyally takes care of her paralyzed husband. This is clearly seen here:

Dalam kesibukan apa pun, aku tetap bersihkan tubuh badan Lawrence dengan rapi serapi-rapinya. Aku sapu krim dan bedak pada celah-celah peha dan celah punggungnya dan sekitar anggota sulitnya hingga ke pusat. Aku pastikan tempat-tempat ini kering, tidak lembab sebelum dipakaikan lampin.

No matter how busy, I would clean Lawrence as carefully as possible. I would apply cream, and powder in the folds between his buttocks and his private parts until the navel. I would make sure these places are dry before putting a diaper on him.

(Fatimah Busu, *The Missing Piece: Part Two*, 2008:48)

This excerpt proves that the author has inserted this message of a wife's loyalty in all situations as one of the activities that will bring about purification of the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*). Imrah never neglects this role as the loyal helper to her husband during those times that he needs her. This can also be seen as a call by the author to all women to return to their roles as wives who should always be loyal to their husbands. This call on women to be loyal wives can also be found in the Qur'an, where, in *Surah an-Nisa* it says:

"... the righteous women are devoutly obedient and guard (in their husband's) absence what Allah would have them guard."

(*an-Nisa*:34)

The interpretation of the verse given above clearly shows that a wife is required by the Qur'an to be loyal and steadfast. This verse also proves that the author uses a real context as a source for the elements of *tazkiyah al-nafs* in her female character. This also

shows that the author is making an actual reference in showcasing the dignity of women through this Islamic element. Further, this fits the element of *manhaj* (methodology) that will bring about *tazkiyah al-nafs*. The *manhaj* requires that in seeking spiritual guidance, one should look to the Qur'an and *Sunnah* (Prophetic traditions) as sources. Since the depiction of Imrah is in line with the status of women in the Qur'an and *Sunnah*, it proves that *The Missing Piece* is a literary work that raises the element of *tazkiyah al-nafs* in the depiction of the female character.

(2) Woman and her children

Islam is a religion that brings fairness and justice to human beings, while maintaining the importance of children as enrichers of their parents' lives and continuers of life after their deaths. The Prophet SAW also reminded parents that they should raise their children on the sanctity of Islam. In *The Missing Piece*, the author brings up the issue of fairness in children's upbringing through the character of Imrah. The presentation of the concept of fairness in children's upbringing can be traced as a reflection of the reinforcement of the value of worship within Imrah's character. The concept of fairness in children's upbringing can be seen in the following excerpt:

Kami beli rak buku, meja tulis, kerusi, kerusi rehat, almari pakaian, lampu meja, semuanya untuk seorang sebuah. Bilik nombor tiga seperti di bahagi dua. Sebelah untuk Junior dan sebelah untuk Adik. Di tengah-tengahnya dibuat tempat sembahyang. Junior dan Adik pun sangat gembira menyusun buku-buku di dalam rak buku masing-masing dan menggantung pakaian di dalam almari masing-masing.

We bought book shelves, desks, chairs, arm chairs, wardrobes, reading lamps, one each for everyone. The third room was divided into two. One side of the room was for Junior and the other for Adik. In the centre we created a prayer area. Junior and Adik happily arranged their books on their bookshelves and hung their clothes in their wardrobes.

(Fatimah Busu, *The Missing Piece: Part One*, 2005:839)

Here, it is clear that Imrah tries to infuse elements of fairness into her children's upbringing. This is also one of the elements of purification of the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*) which will create a harmonious family. Apart from this, being fair in treating one's children is called upon in Islam to shape the children's personality. In fact, Islam forbids its followers to make differences between their children. This is explained in a *hadith* (Prophetic saying) narrated by Nu'man bin Bashir about his father's actions:

My father bequeathed to me a portion of his property, upon which my mother 'Amrah Binti Rawahah said: "I do not agree unless it has been witnessed by Rasulullah SAW." Thus my father went to the Prophet SAW to have his bequest witnessed. Upon which the Rasulullah SAW said to my father:

"Have you done the same to all your children (bequeathed your property)?" (My father) said: "No." The Prophet said: "You must have taqwa before Allah and be just to your children" Thus my father returned and took back what he had bequeathed.

(Hadith narrated by Muslim)

Using this *hadith* as a point of departure, it is clear that a woman also needs to be fair in her efforts to shape the characters of her children. Children who feel that they are treated fairly will not harbour feelings of envy, jealousy or despair. It can clearly be seen here that a method that leans towards a cleansing of the soul is important in order to achieve a perfect, harmonious life. This focus should be analysed in order to shape a new dimension of understanding about the sanctity of Islam in leading its *ummah* towards a peaceful, successful life. The perception of Malay women as being confined within the limits of a strict religion can also be refuted if examples that touch on this Islamic concept are given due attention.

(3) Woman and society

The Qur'an also includes the value of love and co-operation among human beings. This is mentioned in verse 103 of *Surah Ali Imran*:

And hold fast, all together, by the Rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; And remember

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with gratitude Allah's favour on you; for you were enemies and he joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, you became brethren

(*Ali Imran*: 103)

The interpretation of this verse, given above, shows clearly that Allah SWT has called on believers to love each other based on *iman* and *taqwa*, in order to foster *ukhuwwah* (brotherhood) within society. Human beings are created by Allah as naturally gregarious creatures (Haron Din, 1990:195). Therefore, human beings should be willing to help one another so that they will be able to build a better life for all. This is also related to *amar makruf nahi mungkar*, whereby it is meant to create goodness and remove whatever is evil in human relationships (*habl min al-nas*). The role played by women in this is as the catalyst for the development of the *ummah*. The role of women is not only to seek justice in society but also to educate and contribute towards the good of other members of society. Fatimah Busu portrays this in *The Missing Piece*. Imrah always fulfils her *zakat* obligation and helps young children receive a religious education by contributing towards the building of a *madrasah* (religious school). This is seen in the following excerpt:

"*Im mahu jadikan rumah di Tanjung Bunga tempat budak-budak belajar al-Quran*"

"*Saya mahu gunakan pencen Charlie yang diwariskan kepada saya, untuk bayar gaji tenaga pengajarnya sama seperti yang saya lakukan kepada tenaga pengajar kelas al-Quran di rumah suami saya yang dulu di Tanjung Bunga*".

"I want to make the house in Tanjung Bunga a place for children to learn the Qur'an"

"I want to use Charlie's pension, which he left me, to pay the teachers just like what I used to do with the teachers of the Qur'anic classes at my husband's house in Tanjung Bunga."

(Fatimah Busu, *The Missing Piece: Part Two*, 2008: 314 & 695)

This excerpt makes clear that the author depicts Imrah as a

woman who contributes to her society. Apart from playing a positive role as a wife and mother, Imrah carries out her responsibility as a member of society as required in Islam. In Islam, women are considered *mukallaf* (those with responsibilities), just like the men. Therefore, leading her society towards goodness is a part of the responsibility of a woman. This can also be seen as an important part of the content, as it shows women's qualities through their involvement in society. The involvement of women in Islamic missionary activities, their contribution in developing the Muslim *ummah* and their involvement in the field of religious studies should be a focus when analysing women's writing. This will not only open new avenues in the study of women's literature but will also highlight the high status that Islam gives to women, as Islam treats women justly, based on several *surah* in the Qur'an. Therefore, an analysis based on the concept of *tazkiyah al-nafs* can open new doors in evaluating the potential of women writers to demonstrate the elevated status of women through an Islamic approach.

Conclusion

This research, which focuses on aspects of *tazkiyah al-nafs*, proves that the novel *The Missing Piece* is a literary work that exhibits a focus on the depiction of a female character aimed at displaying the status of women in Islam. As a prolific author who is sensitive towards women's issues, the author never neglects to portray the real situations of a woman's life and female instincts. The efforts of the author to connect the two contexts (the socio-cultural reality of women and women in Islam) can be seen as resulting from a realization of what is acceptable to today's readership. The portrayal of such female characters gives new justifications to the abilities of women in literature. This refers to the focus on the characterization of women in literary works that must not merely be evaluated in terms of political, economic and social point of views but should also be seen in the sphere of home life and Islamic missionary activities. These aspects should be focused on in order to give a new value to the study of women's writing today. Through this method, women's writing will no longer be evaluated merely based on the portrayal of moral values and

qualities alone. In fact, the elements of Islamic awareness will also make the reader realize that women have an elevated status in Islam in all areas of life.

It is proven that *The Missing Piece* is a work that can be used to present the nature of a Muslim woman while at the same time conveying messages connected to the purification of the soul of women in Islam. The concept of *tazkiyah al-nafs* which included *taharah, salah, zakat*, reading of the Qur'an, *ridha* and *amar ma'ruf nahi mungkar* has been shown clearly in this study through the relationship of the human with Allah SWT (*habl min Allah*) and the relationship of humans with one another (*habl min al-nas*). An analysis applying the concept of *tazkiyah al-nafs* proves that *The Missing Piece* is not merely a work that focuses only on the expression of love by one human being to another. In fact, this novel can be seen as an expression of love towards God by a human being through the concept of purification of the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*).

In producing her recent novel, it can be observed that Fatimah Busu is one writer who consciously includes Islamic influences in the subject of her works. This effort should be given further attention so that women's writing may also be classified as platforms capable of generating the development of an exceptional *ummah*.

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