

IBRAH AND TARBIYAH: THE APPROACHES TO LEARNING AND TEACHING IN KUASA KATA DARI LISAN MENGALIR KE LAUTAN AKSARA

(Wasilah Ibrah dan Tarbiah dalam Kuasa Kata dari Lisan Mengalir ke Lautan Aksara)

Kamariah Kamarudin
kkamaria@upm.edu.my

Malay Language Department,
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication,
Universiti Putra Malaysia,
43400 Serdang, Selangor Darul Ehsan.
Tel.: +603-89468755

Abstract

The relationship between teaching and educating is significant in the impression of life. It is not merely a subject in the school syllabus, or components extracted from the process of reading a literature text. In fact, these two elements, *ibrah* (learning) and *tarbiyah* (teaching) according to the Islamic perspective have a more extensive meaning in order to build a stronger society. It is found that these elements, *ibrah* and *tarbiyah*, form a strong bond in developing the core values of life and society. Thus, this article is an explanation on the approaches of *ibrah* and *tarbiyah* in the memoir by Mahaya Md. Yassin titled *Kuasa Kata dari Lisan Mengalir ke Lautan Aksara*. This article describes the significance of the approaches of *ibrah* and *tarbiyah* in the literary work mentioned, in which the relationship between human beings with one another (*habl min al-Nas*) and the relationship of humans with The Creator (*habl min Allah*) are advocated. Based on this study, it is clear that the author includes four approaches of *ibrah* and *tarbiyah* in her writing, i.e. concerning family, career, work and leadership, to support her message. This study also shows that the memoir is a valuable form of information and a guide to learning and teaching for all concerned.

Keywords: *wasilah, ibrah, tarbiyah*, literature text, memoir

Abstrak

*Peri pentingnya hubungan antara pengajaran dengan pendidikan dalam relung kehidupan, bukan sekadar suatu bahan dalam mata pelajaran atau sukatan persekolahan, atau unsur yang diperoleh dalam teks kesusasteraan dalam proses pembacaan. Dua elemen ini, iaitu ibrah (pengajaran) dan tarbiah (pendidikan) dalam perspektif Islam mempunyai maksud yang lebih luas pengungkapannya bagi membangunkan keutuhan masyarakat. Didapati kedua-dua elemen ini, ibrah dan tarbiah sebagai satu paduan kukuh untuk membentuk nilai luhur dalam kehidupan dan kemasyarakatan. Oleh itu, makalah ini memperkatakan wasilah ibrah dan tarbiah dalam tulisan memoir Mahaya Md. Yassin, Kuasa Kata dari Lisan Mengalir ke Lautan Aksara. Makalah ini memperlihatkan kepentingan wasilah ibrah dan tarbiah dalam karya terbabit yang mengajukan hubungan manusia dengan manusia (*habl min al-Nas*) dan hubungan manusia dengan Yang Maha Pencipta (*habl min Allah*). Berdasarkan kajian jelas menunjukkan bahawa pengarang mengungkapkan empat wasilah ibrah dan tarbiah dalam tulisannya, iaitu dalam keluarga, kerjaya, karya dan kepimpinan sebagai sandaran perutusan yang bermanfaat buat khalayak pembaca. Kajian ini juga memperlihatkan bahawa buku memoir berguna sebagai panduan dan pedoman dalam menggalurkan ibrah dan tarbiah buat semua.*

Kata kunci: wasilah, ibrah, tarbiah, teks kesusasteraan, memoir

INTRODUCTION

It is established that the significance of moral values in education is confined to just this field but also encompasses the sphere of life that is filled with trials and tribulations. In fact, within the realm of the local Malay literature, the necessity for literary works that propose the virtues of decency, truth and beauty is much needed and appreciated. There exist various literary genres such as poetry, prose and even the memoir, that may provide guidance for society, and could be taken as examples to be followed. Similarly, the memoir, whose feature it is to record certain situations, and to relate someone's life story, serves to impart a number of lessons, and at the same time provide enlightenment and serves as a reminder. It is found that this element of *ibrah* and *tarbiyah* is not merely aimed at a certain group of the society or an isolated community, but is meant for all people on earth as guidance.

This is what takes place through the memoir by Mahaya Mohd. Yassin titled *Kuasa Kata, dari Lisan Mengalir ke Lautan Aksara* (*The Power of Speech Flowing from Expression to the Ocean of Letters*). Apart from recounting the ancestry and the lineage of this Negeri Sembilan-born writer, it also includes the experiences of the author in the field of education and writing in her journey towards adulthood. Therefore, this article will show the significance of the approaches of *ibrah* (learning) and *tarbiyah* (teaching) in this literary work, which touches on the relationship between human beings with one another (*habl min al-Nas*) and the relationship of humans with The Creator (*habl min Allah*). In addition, in the conceptual context of the *Takmilah* (Divine Principle) Theory, *ibrah* and *tarbiyah* in Malay literature require an inter-relation between three main subjects, i.e. the literary work, the producer and the public as the basis for writing a creative work. Therefore, the approach of *ibrah* and *tarbiyah* in this study shows that the author endeavors to present a sequence of teachings in her literary work, and thus, this work impart meaningful lessons. The relationship between lessons and education, in fact, offers something significant to the development of Malay literature, especially for the future generation.

IBRAH AND TARBIYAH FROM THE ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

From the Islamic perspective, *ibrah* is that which invites people to ponder about knowledge.¹ In fact the explanation of *ibrah* (learning) is found in the Qur'an, for example in *Surah Yusuf*, verse 111, whose meaning can be translated as: "In their stories is surely a lesson to men possessed of minds; it is not a tale forged, but a confirmation of what is before it, and a distinguishing of everything, and a guidance, and a mercy to the people who believe." Again, the explanation of *ibrah* is found in *Surah an-Nahl*, verses 66-67: "And surely in the cattle there is a lesson for you; We give you to drink of that what is in their bellies, from between filth and blood, pure milk sweet to drinkers. And of the fruits of the palms, and the vines, you take therefrom an intoxicant and a provision fair. Surely in that is the sign for a people who understand." Other surahs that mention *ibrah* are *al-Hasyr*, verse 2; *Surah an-Nur*, verse 44, and *Surah al-Mu'min*, verse 21. As a Muslim, studying the translations of the meaning of the Qur'an is obligatory in order to discover the explicit and implicit meanings regarding examples and lessons from the stories related. In fact, Muslims are reminded not to be concerned with just the details of the narration in the Qur'an but the ability to discern the lessons

behind the stories as a way of interacting with the Holy Book. Thus, *ibrah* can be classified to cover:

1. *Ibrah* through stories.
2. Learning from God's blessings and God's creations.
3. Learning from various historical events.²

Apart from that, *tarbiyah* (teaching) is a process in the equipping of a pious person, i.e. to create an overall balance in his potential, objectives, expressions, and actions. While in another context, the teacher or mentor "murobbi" ideally interacts, according to human nature, either directly through words or indirectly by example in accordance with the system and at a specific, proven level, to process bring about the changes in men toward a better condition.³ It is understood that education, from the root word "to educate", includes the concepts of "nurture", "teach" and "care for". Education can thus be described as the continuous process of caring for, and careful nurturing of, the growing body and human talent in order to create a knowledgeable, well-mannered person who will in turn preserve the cultural values of his society. Thus, certain significant terms are found in education that are often used by Islamic scholars, such as *ta'lim* (to educate), *ta'dib* (to discipline) and *tarbiyah* (to teach or to educate). This matter has been detailed by Zakaria Stapa in his article "Pendidikan menurut al-Qur'an dan Sunnah serta Peranannya dalam Memperkasa Tamadun Ummah"⁴ ("Education According to the Qur'an and Sunnah and Its Role in Empowering Civilization of the Ummah"). In this respect, the word *tarbiyah*, which comes from the root word "Rabb" and generally refers to Allah as the teacher of the human race, is seen as the most fitting in the context of education, and will be used in the discussion in this article.⁵ This is because an educational process centred on the mastery of religious knowledge, in which there is an emphasis on *tauhid* (oneness of God) and complete faith in the belief in Islamic teachings in all aspects of life, enhances the educator's effort in teaching. It is found that the most effective education of a person is closely related to the learning or education that they acquire from their own family. In fact, the Qur'an provides guidelines concerning education, namely in *Surah Ali 'Imran*, verse 8⁶; *Surah an-Nisa'*, verse 68⁷, *Surah al-'Araf*, verse 43⁸; *Surah an-Nahl*, verse 121⁹; *Surah al-Mulk*, verse 2¹⁰; and *Surah al-Balad*, verse 10¹¹. These verses show the importance of education as one

of the divisions of *dakwah* (proselytizing) that must be accomplished by every Muslim, male or female. This is also in accordance with the views of Yusuf al-Qardawi that education for the whole life includes the mind, heart and spirit, physical body, character, and behaviour. It is aimed at preparing the person to face society, which constantly has to deal with good and evil, as well as happiness and bitterness.¹² Apart from that, the importance of the mother as an educator, and nurturing the development of the children in a family, is in line with the views of the Islamic scholar, Abdullah Nasih Ulwan, who said that: “As long as the child is still young and is still in the parents’ care, it is essential for the parents to try various methods of teaching or educating to improve and straighten the behavior of the child that has gone astray. That way, the child can grow according to the perfect ethics and noble values of Islam.”¹³

In that regard, the Qur’an clearly commends the importance of educating within the family, as stated in *Surah Tahrim*, verse 6: “Believers, guard yourselves and your families against a fire whose fuel is men and stones, and over which are harsh, terrible angels who disobey not God in what He commands them, and do what they are commanded.” And the same is reinforced in *Surah Luqman*, verse 17, which can be rendered as: “O my son, perform the prayer, and bid unto honor, and forbid dishonor. And bear patiently whatever may befall thee; surely that is true constancy.” The importance of raising children to become righteous offspring to bear and build a faithful nation, or ummah mukmin, is suggested in *Surah Ali’- Imran*, verse 38: “Then Zachariah prayed to his Lord saying, ‘Lord, give me of Thy goodness a goodly offspring. Yea, Thou hearest prayer.’” Apart from that, there are some hadith which tell about the importance of *tarbiyah* within the family, for example, by Abu Hurairah r.a., who narrated that Allah’s Messenger said: “When the son of Adam dies, no further reward is recorded for his actions, with three exceptions: charity whose benefit is continuous, knowledge from which benefit continues to be reaped, or the supplication of a righteous son (for him).” (Sahih hadith reported by Muslim). This is followed by a hadith from Abu Darda: “while we were with Allah’s Messenger, we were talking about getting older, and the Messenger said, ‘Verily Allah will not suspend a soul when death has arrived. However, the definition of age is that God gives sustenance to His servants in the form of righteous offspring, who pray for the good of the parents that their prayers accompany them when they were in the grave’”, (reported by al-Haakim). Another hadith on the importance of children for a family is translated as follows: “Verily, what

is best to be eaten by someone is the product of his own toil, and indeed his children are the result of his toil” (reported by Ahmad, Al-Bukhari, Abu Daud, Al-Nasai’e and Ibn Majah).

Hence, under *tarbiyah* (education) we can include the following:

1. The continuous process of development and guidance, that includes the physical body, mind, and spirit, with the mission that pupils should grow and mature and become independent in society.
2. Activities that are participated in with feelings of love, tenderness, attention, wisdom, and enthusiasm (not boredom).
3. Perfecting human nature, giving boundless happiness and honour, according to the command of Allah.
4. Processes that are systematically planned and performed in stages, from the simple to the complex.
5. Teaching children through the imparting of knowledge using a simple method so that they can apply this in their daily life.
6. Activities for children that cover development, nurturing, caring, managing, educating, giving guidance, training, perfecting, and a sense of belonging.¹⁴

While in other aspects, the teacher is an exceptional educator capable of develop the spirits of his students, according to the following categories:

1. The teacher is a *mudarris* (educator): a teacher that teaches and conveys information.
2. The teacher is a *mu’alim* (mentor): a teacher that teaches true knowledge and inculcates an honorable *sahsiah*(character).
3. The teacher is a *murabbi* (guardian): a teacher that educates, nurtures and shapes the pupils until love and trust toward one another exist.
4. The teacher is a *mu’adib* (educator): a teacher that maintains a good character himself in order to educate the children of the nation.
5. The teacher is *mursyid* (spiritual master): a teacher that is ready to be an earnest mentor.
6. The teacher is a *da’ie* (preacher): a teacher that asks and teaches pupils to do good deeds.¹⁵

Therefore, it is clear that the underlying conditions for parents to be quality educators is that they should be wise (with religious knowledge), thankful, God-fearing (*taqwa*) and be good examples or have exemplary

characters themselves. These elements must be given priority in the family in reinforcing education. Apart from that, the essential quality to be an educator for the public or society requires a person's complete sincerity to develop the nation's children to honour the comprehensive universal religion, i.e. Islam. To this end, this article probes how *ibrah* and *tarbiyah* are reflected in Mahaya Mohd. Yassin's memoir, *Kuasa Kata dari Lisan Mengalir ke Lautan Aksara*.

This book has won the Hadiah Sastera Perdana Malaysia (HSPM) (Malaysia Premier Literary Award) in 2012 in the biography/autobiography category.

IBRAH AND TARBIYAH IN KUASA KATA DARI LISAN MENGALIR KE LAUTAN AKSARA BY MAHAYA MOHD. YASSIN

Mahaya Mohd. Yassin's memoir presents the approaches of *ibrah* and *tarbiyah* in various aspects of life, within the family, career, literary works and leadership.

(i) *Ibrah* and *Tarbiyah* in the Family

Ibrah and *tarbiyah* in the family is presented by the author as a harmonic unity, beginning with her life from a young age, being raised by her parents till adulthood; and later, after getting married, this method of educating was applied with her children. Mahaya's parents were the main support, allowing her to get a comprehensive education, both secular and religious. This is explained by the author who describes being raised by her parents in Tanjung Petai, Negeri Sembilan. The author describes her parents' as very strict in educating her and her siblings, and yet very compassionate, and thus forming a close relationship. This is depicted through her mother's hard work while toiling in the paddy field, apart from being an entertainer to her children by regularly telling them folk stories as a method of teaching. In addition, her mother would recite *syair* (traditional poems recited melodiously) to create a happy ambience while working with the children and grandchildren.¹⁶ This shows that parents have a big responsibility in educating the children, not only in certain affairs but also in supporting the interests and inclinations of the children and other family members in certain fields. This is confirmed by the author in that her active involvement in language, literature and culture is due to the guidance and encouragement from her parents from an early stage, apart from the motivation from her teachers in school.¹⁷ Her father's effort in using newspapers as reading material and a means for channelling

ideas is also a method of education for the growth of the children and family members. Apart from making nature a means to educate the children, Mahaya's mother gave her the guidance to be a refined woman through tales she narrated to her children all the time. Words of wisdom and reminders were often used as to teach the children and grandchildren to be useful people. This is expressed by the author in the following example:

“Don't be snobbish, conceited, and obstinate or wicked like the character in the story. You will not be blessed. To be smart, study hard. Do good deeds. Always be helpful to others, do not forget those who have helped you. And most important always perform the prayers, read the Qur'an. Don't forget always supplicate to Allah.” (p.10).

Based on the above quote, it clearly shows that the author grew up pleasantly in her mother's care until she became not just a successful “teacher” and a “writer” in the eyes of the society; but also a caring person in her efforts to produce intelligent and honorable people to be perfect individuals in God's sight, especially in educating her children. Therefore, in terms of educating her own children, after marrying Agus Salim, she continued to practice this method of educating acquired from her parents. The author expresses the experience as below:

At every opportunity, we congregate to perform the prayer. Elder sibling lead the younger. After praying, they ask for forgiveness and hug each other just as we did before departing or meeting each other again. Their father always gives a short lesson. He will insert teachings on good character, such as helping to look after the little ones, or assisting mom, dad, grandma, and grandpa. Or that they must be well-mannered, not forgetting to be grateful to Allah, to say thank you to their parents after each meal or when receiving something, even after being chided. (p. 164).

It is found that it is essential to teach and educate siblings to have respect for one another, and this should be used as the foundation for parental teaching. Mahaya expresses this in her work to show that nicknames among family members can strengthen family ties and the feeling of pure and sincere love. Thus, it teaches the reading public that apart from the efforts of nurturing the children to be successful academically, they also need to be taught the positive attitude of respecting others. This, too, is detailed in *Kuasa Kata dari Lisan Mengalir ke Lautan Aksara*. To quote an example:

Another aspect that has become the routine activity in our family is the use of nicknames. Most families use nicknames too, such as “along”, “angah”, “ateh”, “acik”, and others. But these nicknames actually bring the family together, creating a strong bond, and ultimately developing a strong sense of unity. (p. 169).

To balance the children’s education in terms of religious and academic matters is the focal point for parents toward shaping their children, and the home is where it should take place. Developing the children’s character at home is essential, for it conforms to the *slogan rumahku syurgaku* (My home, my paradise). Apart from making the house a home for building humane values, making it a place to cultivate the children’s interest and inclinations in any field should also be considered and prioritized. This is mentioned by the author through her diligent effort to educate her children in various activities resulting in the ability to generate thinking and maturity. In fact, it can also train children to love the world of books, apart from understanding that their parents are teachers and writers too. Mahaya’s effectiveness in exposing her children to the world of reading resulted in one of her children becoming a writer: her eldest son, Shazmee Rizal, who inherited her talent. The practice of reading that has become the main activity in their family is the result of the diligent effort of the author in nurturing her children to utilize newspapers and books:

Family activities are varied. Other than doing physical activities, we make it a normal routine to exploit the newspapers. The approach can be regarded as the “in-house newspaper” concept. Some of us try to solve the crossword puzzles, quizzes, colouring, or copying the poems and sayings. (p. 173).

Apart from being the place for the children to grow into adults, Mahaya and her husband also made their home the family’s legacy for love. The reason why “Rumah Rindu” in Taman Paroi Jaya was built was to make it a dwelling place for the whole family. To them, “Rumah Rindu” (The House of Longings) has served not only as an abode for the family but also as the location for meetings and farewells.

Our parents were with us at Rumah Rindu, Taman Paroi Jaya for nearly 20 years. My husband chose the name - “Rumah Rindu”. The name that reflected our story. After being married for five years, we were still living apart. The distance of tens or even hundreds of miles opens the path to longing,

which was a constant trial and whispering. And the longing swings like a pendulum. The yearning to see each other. The anxiousness for producing quality writings. The desire to empower the literature in our beloved language together. And it was in the House of Longings that all that we yearned and longed for materialized one by one. (pp. 187-88).

It is clear that the approach of education in the family, as proposed by the author, shows the teaching that is very beneficial in the nurturing of their children in accordance with religious requirements. The combination of Islamic teachings and academics is crucial in moulding people towards becoming the ideal, despite living in a world that is slowly being overtaken by the waves of technology and modernization.

(ii) *Ibrah and Tarbiyah* in the Career

Just how important are the approaches of *ibrah* and *tarbiyah* in the career for improving individual performance while going through various challenges in life particularly in the world of education? This is the issue Mahaya is dealing with in her work, in which she shows her ups-and-downs in her career, being the impact of the inspiration from the people around her. To her, educating the next generation is not just to ensure their success academically but also to develop them into people with personality and a strong sense of humanity. This is expressed by the author as follows:

I hope that my children will work with determination. As a member of a big family, we must be unified. Then only the difficult job can be handled easily. We must also work diligently. Learn to be smart, and learn to be a 'human'. (p. 79).

To develop the students' characters particularly at primary school level, the examples set and developed by the teachers in themselves are the basis of strength. This is what the author shows in *Kuasa Kata dari Lisan Mengalir ke Lautan Aksara*, on how important it is to educate the children with wisdom and affection, especially in reproaching them for mistakes. One instance concerns Mahaya's handling of the attitudes of pupils at the primary school in Seremban where she was teaching. There had been the theft of a pen but she faced it with calm and control: "If anyone has taken it unintentionally, or intentionally, please return it now, I will not be angry or penalize you. Please return it in five minutes from now." (p. 89).

Mahaya's strength in developing her own personal identity in improving education is also highlighted through her determination and commitment to further her studies to the highest level. This intention to further her studies was not merely for material gain or a promotion in her profession but instead to be on the limitless and endless quest for knowledge; as the expression goes, "Seek knowledge even unto China". Apparently, Mahaya sat for the HSC examination three times due to her determination to further her studies to the university level, and this itself is a lesson for the public. Her perseverance and persistence made her fulfil her ambition and prove that Mahaya was educated not only by her family but through self-education, and in turn she also educated others.

Realizing how important it is in Islam to acquire knowledge, we renewed our resolve. For instance, after getting married, both of us sat for the Higher School Certificate (HSC) examination three times. Our main objective was to keep on challenging ourselves to stay up-to-date with the elements surrounding the educational world. There were assignments that kept us busy with books and knowledge. And surely we wanted to achieve our ambition to further our studies to the ivory tower. (p. 115).

Mahaya's caring nature as a teacher is highlighted not only in that she displayed an honourable character as an example for her students, but also through her guidance in developing their writing skills. This is seen through the manner in which she instructed her children at home. Being a teacher, Mahaya benefited from the chance to educate her children in improving their writing ability from time to time. This is suggested by the writer based on the following example:

As a teacher, we care for the quality of the pupils' handwriting. Neat and beautiful writing will help towards the success of their education. Consequently, we create our own strategy to train the children to write neatly and beautifully. They were given special exercise books, with colored lines for writing exercises. These are sets of blue, red and black lines as the guide to draft the high and low, long and short of each letter. When their handwriting starts to look rounded, with the same size, direction, and neat, only then will they be given the exercise books with normal lines. (pp. 170-71).

Mahaya's capability as a teacher who has served for decades in the field of education shows her spirit as a superior teacher. In fact, Mahaya's experience as a college student, who later worked at the same place to teach

the next generation, is a process of educating that is an enormous struggle in the world of education. The author tried in many ways to capture the hearts of the youngsters (students of MPRM) to stay focused in learning and eventually getting excellent results, which everyone hopes to achieve. Mahaya explains:

... an objective set fast in the heart, “Allah allowed me to succeed in such a way, now is my chance to teach and lead my students to excel.” There were times when I was strict with my trainees. “Don’t try to fool around with me and hide anywhere. I was a student here before, I know every inch of MPRM!” (p. 195).

Mahaya is seen as a true teacher in her capacity to drive home sincere principles in her endeavor to educate the next generation. This is observed through her neverending dedication and perseverance to educate college students to be active in learning to be teachers having balanced qualities and being capable of thinking proactively. This is expressed by the author as follows:

I often challenged my students, the trainee teachers, on their creativity and sensitivity. I feel happy if they can argue sensibly, supported by facts and data. Especially when there are more speakers voicing out their thoughts. The future teachers must hone their minds and skills and possess spiritual, emotional and social aptitude; and be able to act quickly and rationally. (p. 210).

The approach of *ibrah* and *tarbiyah* where career is concerned is reflected in Mahaya’s determination to achieve her goal along with her perseverance to acquire knowledge. Again, this provides a very valuable lesson for the readers, that is, to avoid letting emotion take over when faced with trials and tribulations, and instead try harder to take control with a clear mind. The period of service as a teacher for nearly 34 years, combined with being a prolific writer, have proven Mahaya to be a powerful and meritorious lady in the current, challenging society.

(iii) *Ibrah* and *Tarbiyah* in Creative Writing

The importance of the approach of *ibrah* and *tarbiyah* in creative writing is important for a writer because it can be a useful heritage for the future generation. The excitement of the author in the world of creative writing is not just for the sake of material gain or to achieve popularity, it is also a means

of contributing for spiritual gain. The author makes an honest admission on the importance of linking *dakwah* (preaching) and *ibadah* (worship) in creative writing, in order for it to be beneficial and of great effect to the public. This issue is addressed by Mahaya in below:

I realize that all that I have expressed will not escape from the reckoning of the All-knowing. I realize what is produced must be beneficial. To produce a work is to preach. Just like being a teacher, I must be an excellent teacher, knowledgeable, sincere, and also practice whatever I have said for His sake. The combination of these two fields, education and writing, is just beautiful. (p. 97).

Apart from that, the author also cultivated the interest in writing which she shares with her husband, the father of her children.¹⁸ The reading culture was instilled in her children from small, and continued to be promoted until they reached adulthood, finally leading to the achievements of their eldest son, Shazmee Rizal. In a joint effort they succeeded to produce an anthology *Hingga Gerak Terakhir* (Until the Last Move):

Our children grew up in sync with the interests and activities of their elders. We often get them to participate in language and literature programmes we were involved in. Praise be to Allah, together with Shazmee Rizal, we managed to produce the country's first mother-son anthology of short stories, published by DBP (1993).

Apart from that, Mahaya continuously provided guidance to trainee teachers in order to cultivate writers like her. This is seen from the works published together with her husband in order to further develop Malay literature with the production of the anthologies *Antara Dua Pilihan* and *Di Sini Kasih Tertumpah*.

We managed to produce two collections of youth short-stories written by the trainees. I supervised the anthology of *Antara Dua Pilihan*, while my husband managed the anthology *Di Sini Kasih Tertumpah*. Both were published by Penerbit Fajar Bakti Sdn. Bhd., in 1993. For these projects, the group of trainees of KPLI were guided through writing courses held over several sessions on weekends. (p. 213).

Mahaya's involvement in education for the production of literary works is not just from within but also from outside, for which she cooperated with

radio Negeri Sembilan to strengthen the position of Malay language, literature and culture. Her talk show in the “Sari Bahasa” slot on radio was aimed at raising public awareness about the high status of the Malay language. This is a crucial aspect in writings that aim to remind and educate in the development of Malay literature:

...many people asked me about the effect of SB. It is rather difficult for me to evaluate the effect of this program considering that there is no study or research made regarding the program. I can only guess, that, more or less, the general or the basic matter of the subject has started to find a place in the listeners’ hearts. This is because radio is a mass media with a wide reach, capable of having a great impact. (p. 265).

Thus, it is clear that the approach of *ibrah* and *tarbiyah* in Mahaya’s work is capable of opening the minds and thinking of readers to appreciate the author’s writings better. The insertion of verses from the Qur’an in each chapter nurture the spirit apart from adding beauty to the writing.

(iv) *Ibrah and Tarbiyah in Leadership*

The approach of *ibrah* and *tarbiyah* in leadership is may strengthen and develop the nation. This is highlighted in *Kuasa Kata dari Lisan Mengalir ke Lautan Aksara*, in which the author shows how significant it is for leadership qualities are to be possessed not only by the country’s leaders but also those who manage the household. This, according to Mahaya, is based on her spouse, Agus Salim’s personality, being an understanding and diplomatic partner in encouraging his wife’s determination to realize her ambition to be a successful teacher and writer. Mahaya describes her husband honorable personality as follows:

He stressed over and over again, “We need to sacrifice in order to be successful. Everything is for Allah. I pray that this sacrifice will be beneficial to the children and everybody else. If we die while learning, Allah will reward us with merit.” (p. 117).

Apart from being a leader to his wife, Agus Salim also illustrated his leadership capacity in educating the children not only academically but also concerning daily life, for instance in matters that could be regarded as trivial but will be of great significance when they become adults, especially when dealing with the management of an organization or administrating the

country. This is seen in the method Mahaya's husband teaches the children to care about cleanliness and cleaning and getting rid of the rubbish. This will enable the development of the children's character in contributing towards a progressive society:

The activity that the children look forward most to is the burning of rubbish at night. The rubbish is made of dried leaves and rambutan branches, coconut fronds and weeds that we had collected together during *gotong-royong* the evening before. When these are burnt, the special sweetness of the aroma will rise and disperse in the coolness of the night, and the smoke will drive away the mosquitoes from us. (p. 187)

Indeed, *Kuasa Kata dari Lisan Mengalir ke Lautan Aksara* depicts the leadership of Mahaya's father as the "head of the family" who was not only responsible for educating and raising her but also her children. This is revealed by the writer based on her father's willingness to lend her money when she furthered her studies at University Malaya, at the same time taking care of her children in their kampong in her absence during her studies. Mahaya describes it as:

Abah (Dad) was very understanding. Abah sympathized, in fact empathized. Not just financially, Abah would offer all the support he was capable of, just so that my husband and my dreams could come true. Abah's support was boundless. (p. 155).

Mahaya's leadership capacity as a mother is also displayed in *Kuasa Kata dari Lisan Mengalir ke Lautan Aksara*. In raising her children, she was very compassionate when giving advice. Every night, even though exhausted from her job as a teacher, she would never forego her "quality time" with her children to tell them stories and to foster a close relationship with her children, despite her demanding schedule juggling various duties.

Since we were little, we used to tell stories alternately every night. Every tale which Emak (Mom) had told us when we were children till we were teenagers was retold. These were new, modified versions. Malay folk tales such as the mousedeer stories, as well as stories of our origin were always of great interest to them. (p. 168).

Apart from her leadership role as a wife and mother, Mahaya was also given the responsibility as a committee member of the Parents and Teachers

Association (PTA) in her children's school. Even her hectic schedule as an educator in a college did not hinder her from rendering her service in the school where her children studied. In fact, she participated hand-in-hand with the school in various activities to improve the school and the students:

... I was elected as the committee member of the Parent-Teachers Association (PTA) at that end-of-year meeting. Oh yes, talking about PTA, it reminds me of the role of parents in helping the school authorities to manage the children's P&P ... we managed the extra classes together, motivational courses, co-curriculum activities, and volunteer work such as *bergotong-royong* (communal helping of one another) to clean the surrounding areas ... (pp. 180-81).

Mahaya's leadership as a teacher and writer left a great impression on her students. This included her diligent effort, ignoring her weariness, to improve them not only during class but also after the school and college period ended. To this end, she organized activities such as excursions to various destinations and locations, in order to add to their experiences and knowledge.

For activities such as excursions, other than going to DBP or other publishing houses, we also visited Rumah Sri Kasih and Rumah Tunas Harapan. After each activity, the trainees would be given guidance to write. The product of their writing would be edited together, and the material would straight away be published in the society's magazine. (p. 212).

This was in connection with her leadership of the Writers' Association of Negeri Sembilan (PEN) that required serious involvement and performance and commitment in developing the national language and culture. Since the mission of the association is to produce writers as the country's back-up generation, Mahaya made it a reality by publishing a few anthologies of short stories, and organizing workshops to fulfill the need for knowledge in writing:

As a committee member of PEN, I also got them involved in the programmes organized by PEN with several institutions in Negeri Sembilan. For example, when GAPENA and PEN organized Perkampungan Penulis Zon Selatan (The Southern Zone Writers Camp) in 1998, many trainees from MPRM had the chance to participate. Apart from that was the publishing of 12 anthologies of short stories for primary schools. The books were compiled in one set entitled *Siri Mekar*, each containing five stories on religion, family, nationalism, and education. (p. 213-14).

The trait which is the strength in every individual is, of course, self-leadership for being the servant of Allah on earth. This is displayed by the author through her expressions on how important it is to be a viceroy or representative who is not only to enrich the earth with physical and material success but also with *maknawi* (figurative or symbolic) and spiritual progress. This is presented by Mahaya as follows:

My belief is that as a human, I am the slave of Allah—the viceroy of Allah—having the responsibility to worship and to preach. In order to execute this, knowledge is required, and the medium of knowledge is language. In accordance with this, it is essential for every person to master more than one language in order to achieve the desire to acquire knowledge. However, the Malay language as the National Language must be mastered first. It is true that language is the soul of the nation. If Malaysians do not honor the national language, who else will be held responsible? (p. 269).

The success of a Muslim in handling the crisis of life in the moment of bitter tribulation is the biggest mandate and *jihad* (struggle). This portrayed by Mahaya based on some bitter experiences, whereby she faced the departing of beloved family members one by one; she struggled to endure the loss with all the resilience and patience that she could muster. This is an example of education in leadership: that as the servant of God on earth, one must be prepared to face, with faith and the sense of God-fearing, any misfortune that befalls.

But then again I realized, why must I be unhappy, disappointed or moan? Allah has bestowed me with everything, all this while. The mercy, the happiness, the endowment and all the pleasures of having all the good things is just uncountable. Allah is still letting me breathe. So there must be responsibility to be shouldered. His emphasis in *Surah ar-Rahman*, in which is mentioned 31 times, “O which of your Lord’s bounties will you now deny?” really made me to be penitent. (p. 193).

Therefore, it is clear that the approach of *ibrah* and *tarbiyah* in leadership is proven through the ability of the author to perform as a servant of Allah, a wife, a mother and an educator with high integrity. Besides this, she also acquires the life force from her father and husband’s influence as the respected heads of the families and the household.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion regarding the approach of *ibrah* and *tarbiyah* in *Kuasa Kata dari Lisan Mengalir ke Lautan Aksara* clearly shows Mahaya Mohd. Yassin to be an outstanding figure among the country's female teachers. Mahaya's ability lies in actualizing an education that is balanced in physical and spiritual terms, not only within herself and her family but also in her literary works and leadership positions. The effort of the author to record all the experiences and memories she went through in the form of a memoir is not only suitable for the guidance of youths but also for the public.

Apart from refreshing the feeling of repentance, humanity and faith, this literary work also instils patience, fortitude and devotion when it comes to facing various crises in life. Although at times the first question readers may ask is, "is it proper to give self-tribute with transcriptions of reality" in the form of a memoir, the answer to this question is "it is appropriate because it is written with wisdom and prudence". Therefore, such a literary piece should be digested and extensively distributed for the purpose of *ibrah* and *tarbiyah* to enlighten readers toward goodness, truth and beauty in life.

NOTES

- 1 Described as "al-'itibarwal'ibrah" which means a state that leads from a knowledge that is visible toward something that is invisible, or explicitly to mean to ponder and think, please refer Ahmad Asy-Syirbashi, 1985. *Tafsir al-Manar(Trans.)*. Jakarta: Pustaka Firdous.
- 2 Please refer Abd. al-Rahman al-Nahlawi, 2001. *Usul al Tarbiyah al Islamiyah wa Asalibuha fi al Baytwa al Madrasah wa al Mujtama*. Beirut: Daar al Fikri, p. 287.
- 3 Muhammad Syadid, 2003. *Manhaj Tarbiyyah: Metode Pembinaan dalam al-Quran*. Jakarta: Robbani Press.
- 4 Please refer to Zakaria Stapa, Noranizah Yusuf, and Abdul Fatah Shaharudin, 2012. "Pendidikan menurut al-Quran dan Sunnah serta Peranannya dalam Memperkasa Tamadun Ummah" in *Jurnal Hadhari Special Edition 7-22*, p.8, 2012 (www.ukm.my/j/hadhari).
- 5 Other related articles also studied by researchers, please refer Kamariah Kamarudin, 2011. "Risalah Tarbiah dalam Tradisi dan Pengalaman Kepengarangan Islam sebagai Teras Pemikiran dan Pengucapan: Satu Penelitian Terhadap Pengarang Muslimah Mutakhir Pilihan" in Perhimpunan Penulis Muda Nasional (PPMN) III at the National Academy, Jalan Bellamy, Kuala Lumpur on 16-18 December 2011; Kamariah Kamarudin, "Nilai Tarbiah dan Islah Wanita Melayu Islam Pascamerdeka: Satu Analisis terhadap Novel *Tunggu Teduh Dulu dan Surat-surat Perempuan Johor*" in *Jurnal Pengajian Melayu*, 22, 2011; and Kamariah Kamarudin, 2011. "Tarbiah Remaja dalam Novel *Kasih Nan Agung* and *Impuls/Roh Karya Sri Rahayu*" in Seminar Sehari Kesusasteraan Kanak-

- kanak dan Remaja 2011 at the Kuala Lumpur Library on 5 November 2011.
- 6 They prayed: "Our Lord, make not our hearts to swerve after that Thou hast guided us; and give us mercy from Thee, thou art the Giver." (3:8) The Qur'an Interpreted, Saudi Arabia: Mujamma' al-Malik Fahd li Thiba' at al-Mushhaf al-Syarif Madina Munawwarah, The Ministry of the Government of Saudi Arabia in charge of the affairs of the Islamic religion, Endowments, Da'wah and Guidance, *ibid*, 1419H, p. 76.
 - 7 "... and guided them on a straight path." (4:68), *ibid*, p. 130.
 - 8 "We shall strip away all rancor, that is in their breasts; and underneath them river flowing; and they will say, 'Praise belongs to God who guided you into this; Had God guided us, we had surely never been guided. Indeed, our Lord's Messengers came with the truth.' And it will be proclaimed: 'This is your Paradise; you have been given it as your inheritance for what you did.' *ibid*, p. 228.
 - 9 "... showing thankfulness for His blessings; He chose him, and He guided him to a straight path." (16:121), *ibid*, p. 420.
 - 10 "... who created death and life, that He might try you which of you is fairest in works; and He is the All-mighty, the All-forgiving." (67:2), *ibid*, p. 955.
 - 11 "and guided him on the two highways (of good and evil)?" (90:10) *ibid*, page 1061.
 - 12 Please see Yusuf Qardawi, 1983. *Sistem Pendidikan Ikhwanul Muslimin*. Jakarta: Media Da'wah, p. 40.
 - 13 For further reading, please see Abdullah Nashih Ulwan, 1996. *Pedoman Pendidikan Anak Dalam Islam*. Kuala Lumpur: Victory Agence.
 - 14 Abdurrahman Annahlawi, 1996. *Pendidikan Islam di Rumah, Sekolah dan Masyarakat*. Jakarta: Gema Insani Press, pp. 20-25.
 - 15 Please see Abdul Pageim Muhammady, "Peranan Guru dalam Pendidikan Islam" in *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 1:1, p. 15. 4. December 1986. Biro Pendidikan, Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia. Selangor Darul Ehsan.
 - 16 Mahaya Mohd. Yassin, 2012. *Kuasa Kata dari Lisan Mengalir Ke Lautan Aksara*. Seremban: Mahaya Mohd. Yassin, p. 9.
 - 17 *ibid*, p. 46.
 - 18 *ibid*, p. 183.

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(Translated by Saripah Haji Wahid)