

TREATING THE MIND (*AKAL BUDI*) FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF *SYAIR IKAN*: MANUSCRIPT FROM LEIDEN, NETHERLANDS

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Abstract

The Malay communities themselves often considered the traditional literature including *syair* as nothing more than an expression of feeling and lovely phrasing. This statement showed that the Malay community looked literary tradition as not involving 'the treatment of mind' (*akal budi*). In the context of this study, 'the treatment of mind' carried the meaning of maintaining a healthy mind. Therefore, this study classified and analyzed the mind treatment using an old Malay manuscript of *Syair Ikan* which was stored in the Library of Leiden, Netherlands. The *Budi* Theory and the Poetic of Malay Literature Theory would be used in the study. The findings of the study showed that there were three dominant ways to treat the mind in *Syair Ikan*, namely religion, family and symbols of animals. These three dominant ways are used to convey messages, reprimands and as advice to the society.

Keywords: mind, *Syair Ikan*, religion, family, animal symbolism.

INTRODUCTION

The Malays had the creativity to deliver a message or an advice. One of the means of conveying a message to the community was through '*syair*', a type of Malay poetry. The term '*syair*' came from the Arabic word; *shi'r* meaning a poem or poetry while '*shā'ir*' means poet, which had been accepted in Malay language (Ismail Hamid, 1987). Among the famous forms of '*syair*' in Malay literature was religious, romance, history, allegory, advice and so on. '*Syair Ikan*' (literal translation: Fish Poem) was one of the advice poetries belongs to the Malays that could be detected in the Library

of Leiden, Netherlands according to the Catalog of Malay, Minangkabau, and South Sumatran Manuscript in The Netherlands. *SyairIkan* was among the Malay manuscripts found in the special collection. This poem was coded Cod.Or.1990, and had 18 hand written pages by using Jawi writing. This poem had 250 lines written in paper measuring 20 ½ x 16 cm; 14 lines per page. *Syair Ikan* contained advices for young people, which could be traced between the years 1820-1850.

Treatment means taking care of, defending, cultivating and preserving something. '*Akal*

budi (lit: mind/common sense; *akal*: mind/intellect; *budi*: courtesy/virtue) means a healthy mind. The '*akal*' (*al-'aql*) or '*budi*' is a force that allows human beings to think, hence it is sometimes called the power of thought. The mind is different from the brain which is physical in nature and is the center of nerve control, but is often associated with thinking activity. The intellect is a faculty of knowledge that distinguishes human beings from other beings and enables them to carry out daily life and function perfectly as servants of Allah and His caliphs on earth. Indeed, the intellect is closely related to the knowledge (*ilm*), because the intellect is the main tool of human beings to generate or receive knowledge (Md. Salleh Yaapar, 2013).

Additionally, Abdul Halim Ali (2009) stated that '*akal budi*' refers to the wisdom in conveying ideas and thoughts. It is also in line with the opinion of Abang Patdeli (2018), who said that '*akal budi*' are not only outwardly means having a sense, however, '*akal budi*' also means Malays' wisdom and discernment in reasoning, thinking healthy and sanely as well as their versatility in expressing and embodying a language laden with meaning. In this case, Shamsudin, Azhar Ghazali (2015) defined '*akal*' (mind/intellect) and '*budi*' (courtesy/virtue) as a concept that embodied the wisdom of how the Malays think. In addition, Hassan Ahmad (2004) stated that the '*akal budi*' refers to the process by which the Malay tell a story about themselves or define themselves, assess human behavior, understand the concepts of humanity such as justice, perceiving the relationship between man and the relationship between humans and the natural surroundings and with The Creator. These experiences form the Malays' '*akal budi*' collectively from generation to generation, through the process of thinking, reflection and creative imagination and reasoning, pragmatic and natural. In the context of this study, 'the treatment of mind' (*akal budi*) carries the meaning of maintaining a healthy mind.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on '*akal budi*' have been conducted by several previous researchers. Among them, Muhammad Haji Salleh (2020) found that the community traditionally express their thoughts through proverbs that covers the universe, man, family life, social life, economy, religion, education, science, law, health, home and homeland, love, work and occupation, feelings, cultures and universal questions.

Abang Muhi (2018) did a study on '*akal budi*' in Sarawak Malay proverb. This study found that the '*akal budi*' in Sarawak Malay proverb could be seen in several aspects such as knowledge, philosophy, thought, cultures, way of life and creativity. Next, a study conducted by Norazimah Zakaria et al (2018) about the Malay history as traditional symbol of nation's great '*akal budi*'. This study found that the elements of myths and legends presented by the author in the text as a storytelling technique was a symbol of the traditional author's great mind that comes ahead of his time to think critically and creatively. Additionally, Norazimah Zakaria et al (2017) conducted a study on '*akal budi*' and the reflection of identity in *pantun*. This study found the Malay *pantun* contained the '*akal budi*' that was made up of customs and Islam as a source of value, and the religion, community, and family's life surrounding the traditional Malay community that reflects Malay identity.

In addition, the study of '*akal budi*' could also be seen in the field of language. Among them was Julaina Nopiah and Nor Hashimah Jalaluddin's (2015) examining the relationship between language and thought, but try to unearth the Malay '*akal budi*' through the concept of dualism, which was expressed through objects and images of paddy and weeds in the Malay proverb using semantic inquisitive approach. The results showed that the allegorical language is a reflection of Malay '*akal budi*', which are highlighted through the use of *pantun*. Meanwhile, Hawa Mahfuzah and Zulkifley Hamid (2015) conducted a study to see the language of metaphor as an element of symbolism in reflecting the Malay '*akal budi*'. The structural conception metaphor recorded the highest number because the language contained

in the spell mostly has structured items and is in line with the life experiences one has gone through. Malay thinking based on the spell mostly giving parables of their lives from the environment.

Based on the literature review, researchers found that proverb was favored by literary and language scholars in describing the Malay '*akal budi*'. The Malay community presented a few ways to treat the mind. Some of them can be traced in *Syair Ikan*. According to the study, '*akal budi*' of Malay community can be seen in everyday conduct. '*Akal budi*' can be detected through speech, religion, customs, arts, family systems, practice of noble values and so on. Accordingly, this study will classify and analyze the treatment of '*akal budi*' in old Malay manuscript of *Syair Ikan*.

METHODOLOGY

This study used the *Budi* Theory and *Teori Puitika Sastera Melayu* (Poetic of Malay Literature Theory) to discuss '*akal budi*' in *Syair Ikan*. *Budi* Theory was introduced by Lim Kim Hui (2003). This theory discusses the philosophical and conceptual questions of how the Malay community solve problems or conflicts when faced with situations of dissent (argument, namely monolithic versus pluralistic approach, rational than emotional or that synthetic or '*budi*' approach). Lim believed that the Malay community used synthetic approach to solving a problem that was faced through '*budi*' (courtesy) and its network", which was based on '*akal budi*' (healthy mind), '*budi*

bahasa' or courtesy/ manners (behavior or moral), '*budi bicara*' (opinion or judgment) and '*budi daya*' (pragmatic), which play an important role in synthesizing rationalization and emotional intuition. Fostering this core personality will produce a reverend or wise Malay. Those who fail or deviate was considered 'rude', 'less civilized', and the worst of all 'barbaric, cowardly and treacherous' (Hashim Musa, Normahdiah Sheik Said, Rozita Che Rodi, Siti Sarah Ab Karim, 2012).

Budi Theory presented by Lim had four basic principles, namely logic, rationality, fallacy and intuitiveness. According to Lim (2003), logic was the tendency to find the cause and effects relationship. Through this framework, the Malays used it from time to time in developing their thinking. Logic was also more concerned with convincing facts. Rationalization referred to the concept of good and bad. This principle was directly and indirectly influenced the mindset of the Malays to achieve the level of '*budi*' that was the highest good (Lim, 2003). While fallacy referred to a description, reason, assumption, opinion or conclusion that was confused (Lim, 2003). The Malay community was also concerned about the emotion or intuition (Lim, 2003). Malay thinking very creatively by making animals and plants as a metaphor to convey the message. The intuitive principle also saw the heart as a source of compulsion i.e. good or evil. Figure 1 explained the principles of the *Bud* Theory introduced by Lim Kim Hui in 2003.

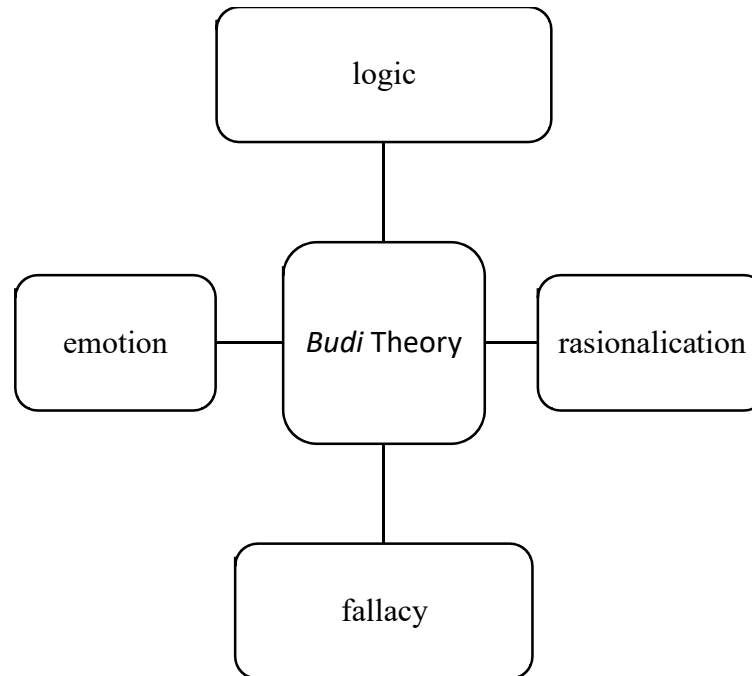


Figure 1: *Budi Theory*

(Source: Lim Kim Hui, 2003)

The Poetic of Malay Literature Theory was found by the National Laureate, Muhammad Haji Salleh in 2002. According to Muhammad (2006), aesthetics (beauty) was the parent of the underlying thought in Malay literature. Beauty was highlighted as basic that theorize Malay literature, and was seen from the genre of classical Malay poetry and prose. This was so because, the greatness and excellence of classical Malay literature text in the beauty that was integrated into the works. The beauty features that was the core of poetic Malay literature could be seen in the beauty in teaching or educating, the beauty in expressing grief or sorrow, the beauty in the storytelling, beauty in feel and beauty of authenticity.

The beauty of teaching or educating by Muhammad Haji Salleh (2006) discussed the contents in the Malay literary works that convey a message, teaching and education to the reader or listener. Beauty in the expression of sorrow or distress saw literary works as a tool of expression of emotions in describing hardships and sorrows (Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2006). The beauty in storytelling, according to Muhammad Haji Salleh (2006) discussed the narration of the content from the beginning to the end of the story. Meanwhile, beauty in feel involved the feelings of the reader or listener. The beauty of authenticity looked at a Malay literary works that include the classical Malay poetry characteristics of '*pantun*' and '*syair*' (Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2006)

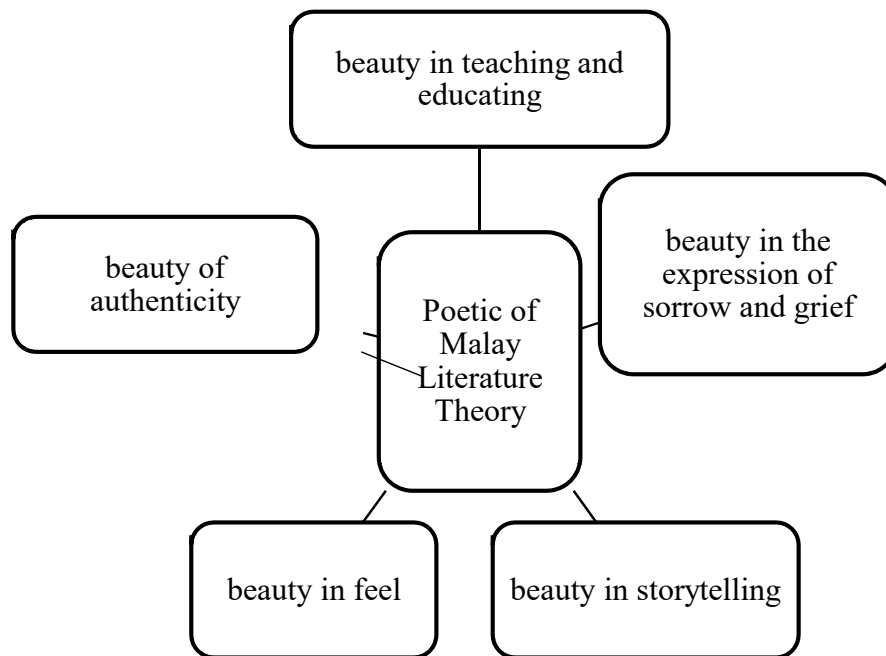


Figure 2: Poetic of Malay Literature Theory (Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2006)

In order to see the aspects of the '*akal budi*' treatment in the *Syair Ikan* studied, the combination of these two theories could make a solid combination of theories in analyzing the '*syair*'. This was because the Poetic of Malay Literature Theory could complete the gaps in the *Budi* Theory.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Religion in Treating the *Akal Budi* of Society

A strong religious foundation is a major factor in treating the '*akal budi*' of the society. This is because, a society that has faith, confidence and trust in the power of Allah SWT will be protected from falling into the worldly tricks. Based on the excerpt of *Syair Ikan*, the poet conveyed some messages to the community to treat '*akal budi*'. Among them, the poet called on the society to make changes in life from negative behavior to positive behavior. In this case, the community needed to abandon the prohibitions of Allah SWT and do His commandments and to not be arrogant. These changes are need in order to produce a society that adheres to the true teachings of religion.

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This is in accordance with the opinion of Muhammad Haji Salleh (2006), that sees literature as a beauty in teaching or educating which means that each piece of Malay literary works conveys a message, teaching and education to the reader or listener as described in the excerpt of the poem that tries to educate human beings to make changes for the better.

Bermadah pula ikan sembilang, (Quoth the sembilang)

Sangga pun selar selar bangsanya kurang, (sangga or selar, selar the nation is lacking)

Sangga pun tiada bangsanya sama, (similarly sangga, the nation is lacking)

Jangan dipakai fe'el lama, (Do not use the old antics)

Larangan Allah orang yang takabbur (God's prohibition, the arrogants)

In addition, the poet invited friends to seek religious knowledge. This is because, religious knowledge is needed in educating the human soul to be better and to avoid getting tortured in the hereafter. In Islam, seeking knowledge is a *fardu ain* which is an obligation to every member of the society. Religious knowledge is needed in fulfilling the spiritual as well as the physical

aspects. A society that has the basis of religious knowledge will find happiness in life in this world and in the hereafter. According to Muhammad Haji Salleh (2006), beauty in teaching and educating can be tracked through each piece of Malay literature that serves to convey a message, teaching and education to the reader or listener as described in the excerpt of the poem, which is to educate people to seek knowledge. The demand for seeking the knowledge is also stated in the words of Allah SWT through Surah al-Mujadalah verse 11, which means: "Allah will elevate those of you who are faithful, and raise those gifted with knowledge in rank." This can be seen in the poem excerpt below:

Kepada selar engganlah aku, (To selar, I refused)

Bangsanya kurang lebih asalku, (his nation is lacking, my origin is superior)

Adinda jangan menghina orang, (My dear, do not insult people)

Alimnya bukan barang-barang, (His knowledge is incomparable)

Ilmunya lebih pada agama, (His knowledge is more on religion)

Tiada baik demikian penerima, (No good is such recipient)

Siksanya sangat didalam kubur (The torment in the grave is severe)

Next, the poet conveys a message to young people to increase their faith by establishing five daily prayers, the importance of knowledge in finding wealth and good behavior will leave a good name. In this case, it is clear that the poet warns of the ill effects if a society ignores the commands of Allah SWT.

Pertama bersedak ikan kakao, (First, quoth the kakao)

Di dalam dunia sangatlah sedap, (The world is great)

Akan jawabnya ikan pari, (The pari answered)

Jikalau demikian betapa peri, (If so, how fair)

Bermula pula ikan sembulan, (Quoth the sembulan)

Baik belajar kita sembahyang (Better we learn to pray)

In addition, the poet also called on the community to seek knowledge to treat 'akal budi'. Knowledge able society will preserve the greatness of its nation's civilization. This is because, knowledge is a guideline to society in daily life. In addition, the poet also gives awareness to the community that only with knowledge, the heart will be calm and can also shape a person's personality. In this case, Zurakintan Abdul Razak & Che Ibrahim Salleh (2015) stated that the Malay Muslim thought of putting knowledge as a high value corresponds to its importance in forming a good personality and make a person more noble than other creatures. The following passage explains the importance of knowledge to society:

Ikan tenggiri pula bersedak, (Quoth the tenggiri)

Banyak orang tiada tah malu, (Many people no longer feel ashamed)

Ilmu ku tuntutan kemudian harta, (Gaining knowledge, then fortune)

Nama yang baik menjadi cerita (A good name becomes a story)

Poets also remind young people of death. Death will come to people regardless of age, time and place. Therefore, the community needs to be prepared to deepen their religious knowledge so that they do not get tormented in the grave. At the end of the poem, the poet instructed young people that the worship performed in the world is a savior from the torment in the hereafter. This is what Muhammad Haji Salleh (2006) emphasizes as the beauty in storytelling, namely the narration of *Syair Ikan* which starts from the message to the community in terms of choosing friends and spouse. At the end of the poem, the poet reminded the community to perform worship in the world so as to not get tortured in the hereafter. Thus, *Syair Ikan* follows the storytelling plot as in the works of the other traditional Malay literature.

Istimewa maksiat mungkin menjadi, (Immorality and sin might feel special)

Jika dikerjakan beroleh seksa, (If done, it will be punished)

Jikalau salah baik ditukar, (If wrong, better change)

Baik juga bersifat sabar, (It's good to be patient)

Ibadat itu terlalu besar (Worship is great)

Dunia akhirat beroleh ghaffar (This world and hereafter, get forgiveness)

The Role of The Family in Treating the *Akal Budi* of The Society

In addition, the treatment of '*akal budi*' can also be done at the basic family level through continuous advice as found in *Syair Ikan*, such as the treatment to a healthy mind is to find a friend who is courteous or have a good personality. Such a friend is likened to a medicine in continuing a life full of challenges. The same goes for finding a life partner. According to the poet, finding a wife is not an easy task. In this regard, the poet advised his community to find a courteous partner because courtesy is an important element to treat '*akal budi*', in addition to the fortune. Therefore, it is also necessary to ask Allah SWT for good wishes. This is explained by the following excerpt:

Perempuan juga banyak yang sudah, (Women are many)

Ia dan bonda sangatlah cinta, (She and mother very much loved)

Mana yang ada sekalian harta, (Whomever have all the fortunes)

Budi bahasa jangan kau buang, (Politeness and courtesy do not throw it away)

According to the excerpt, it clearly proves that the Malay community truly appreciates those who are courteous. In fact, those with high courtesy is glorified more than wealth. Politeness and courtesy are also considered as the face of a nation. In line with that, Mustafa Haji Daud (1995) asserts that courtesy is the soul of a nation. This means that a nation that is not courteous and polite in speaking is considered a nation that has no soul. Being polite is the pinnacle of goodness and the pinnacle of beauty in this life. There is nothing more meaningful and valuable than being

courteous and polite according to the Malay community. This is confirmed by Lim (2003), which stated that the Malay community considers 'heart' as a source of desire, whether good or evil. A good heart will give birth to a virtuous Malay community and vice versa.

In the relationship between husband and wife, the poet suggested that the wife should be well taken care of. Meanwhile, the wife is forbidden to go against her husband. This reciprocal relationship will create a harmonious relationship in the household. According to Lim (2003), the principle of courtesy in the community is also based on the logical aspects, which is the tendency to look for a causal relationship. Based on the excerpt of the poem, the poet clearly advised the young couple to practice tolerance in the household that the husband should take care of the wife while the wife is not encouraged to object to the husband's words. According to Lim, this is the courtesy of the Malay community, which is concerned with the logical principles in every action taken. This can be seen in the excerpt below:

Isteri itu istana dada, (The wife is a palace of the chest)

Isteri itu adanya pasti, (The wife is surely there)

Jangan dipukul jangan dimaki, (Do not beat nor curse her)

Ibarat pula pada perempuan, (It is the same for women)

Keduanya sama jikalau mengerti, (Both are the same, if there is understanding)

Sentiasa hari senanglah hati, (Everyday always happy)

In addition, the poet instructed the husband to maintain the harmony of the household, a husband is advised to act based on courtesy and kindness. This is because, the husband who cannot control his emotions will ruin the household. Therefore, the poet emphasized that this poem was written as a guide for young people to prepare themselves with the knowledge to lead the family. Therefore, a knowledgeable husband will produce a harmonious family institution. This is consistent with the opinion of Lim (2003), which says that

the Malay community emphasized the concept of rational decision-making. Rationale refers to the concepts of good and bad. For example, the excerpt from the poem above explained that a husband must act based on reason and kindness. This is because, this principle has indirectly influenced the mindset of the Malays to achieve the '*budi*', which is the highest level of goodness. This is what is said to be the treatment of '*akal budi*' in the society.

Sukarnya bukan barang-barang, (Hard, truly)
Kerana banyak pantang dan larang, (Because many forbiddance and taboos)
Mencari ilmu jangan kau taksir, (Seek knowledge, do not assess)
Baiklah engkau menjalani fakir, (Better live in poverty)
Mulianya orang menjadi penghulu, (Noble people become the leader)

Based on the poet's message to treat '*akal budi*' in the family system, it can be explained that the Malay community is very concerned with the moral and good manners either in a matter of choosing friends or even find a life partner. Thus, morals and ethics are the most important questions in human life, they need to be constantly polished, pondered and reflected so that the noble virtues stand out (Abdul Rahman Abdul Aziz, 2002). In this regard, beauty in the feel as emphasized by Muhammad Haji Salleh (2006) leaves an impression on the reader, so that they are careful in the matter of choosing friends and a life partner. In choosing friends and life partners, society is reminded to prioritize courtesy and politeness.

Symbolic of Fish in Treating the *Akal Budi* of The Society

Based on the study, researchers also discovered that *Syair Ikan* is a creative work of the Malay community which used the symbols of animals in conveying the message to the people. This can be seen for example *sepat* (snakeskin gouramy), *tenggiri* (mackerel) and *tembara*, which behaved like humans who could speak by giving advices to humans to seek knowledge. This is in line with the opinion of Hassan Ahmad (2004),

which said that the symbolic elements in the Malay literary work have proved that Malays possessed analogical thinking. Analogical thinking that was delivered through imagery, metaphor, simile as well as techniques such as irony was seen as highlighting the genius, intellectual and wise nature of the Malays. It is also in line with the opinion of Ungku Aziz (2001), which stated that traditional literature including *syair* also reflected the wisdom of the Malay's '*akal budi*'. Even Ungku Aziz stressed that the traditional Malay community has a genius nature in conveying the message to the public. The term 'genius' for Ungku Aziz means 'creativity'. In this regard, the researcher argued that the fish depicted as human in the poem played an important role in treating the '*akal budi*' of the society through insinuations, messages, advices and reprimands. The following passage explains the role of fish in the poem:

Sepat bertanya berperi-peri, (Sepat asked earnestly)
Dijawab oleh ikan tenggiri, (Answered by tenggiri)
Setelah sepat mendengar kata, (After sepat hear the word)
Kepada tembara ia bercerita (To tembara he tells)

Therefore, the symbol of fish in the *syair* can be explained that the Malay mindset were very concerned about the emotional or intuitive element in delivering the message. The use of animal symbolic elements which serve as metaphor in the community is to keep the community from being offended by a reprimand or satire (Lim, 2003). This also proved that the Malay community was very creative and knew the importance of beauty elements expressing the Malay '*akal budi*'. This is in line with the opinion of Muhammad Haji Salleh (1999), who stated that the element of beauty is part of the Malay artistic thinking.

CONCLUSION

Through the study of *Syair Ikan* above, it can be concluded that the poetic advice has an

important role in treating the 'akal budi' of Malays. The function of this didactic poem was to give advices, teaching and reprimand the community in terms of religion such as inviting the community to make changes in life by becoming better Muslims, improving religious knowledge and always remembering death. The poem also plays a role in the family system, which was to give advices to the community in choosing friends and life partners with the emphasis on kindness over fortunes. Meanwhile, the symbolic of fish in the *syair* illustrated the wisdom of the poet's analogical mind in using the illustrations and parables to bring awareness to the community. The integration between *Budi* Theory and Poetic of Malay Literature Theory was also highly relevant in revealing the 'akal budi' of the community as described by the poet in the *Syair Ikan*. The results of the study are parallel to the study of Abang Patdeli Abang Muhi. (2018) where virtues will change a person's mind, body and soul. This study also in line with the study of Hawa Mahfuzah & Zulkifley Hamid. (2015) in terms of virtues that help in the process of acceptance in a person's wellbeing. It is hoped that further study will focus on virtues in other genre of literature.

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