

## THE ETHICS OF NURTURING CHILDREN IN TRADITIONAL MALAY LITERATURE

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**Abstract:** This paper was aimed at identifying ‘the ethics of nurturing of children’ in the *Adab* Literature of *Tajus Salatin* and comparing these elements with the works in the Malay Hikayat genre. This study was carried out in response to allegations by Western scholars, who have little regard for the ‘literary’ worth of Malay Literature, especially in the genre of Malay Hikayat. In their opinion, the authors of this genre could not differentiate between science and fiction, facts and illusion, and even went to the extent of entertaining with illustrations of supernatural elements that were illusory and did not benefit their audience in any way. Accordingly, by carrying out a textual analysis of *Tajus Salatin* and several selected works from the genre of Malay Hikayat, this paper highlighted the *adab* (ethics) of ‘nurturing children’, which has been an important responsibility of all individuals who are parents to ‘offspring’ entrusted to them by Allah s.w.t. since the traditional era. It was concluded in this study that the Malay authors successfully carried out their responsibilities with literary awareness because all the items in Chapter 14 of *Tajus Salatin* were discovered in the Malay Hikayat, which were often doubted as to their seriousness and factual accuracy. Evidently, the Malay Hikayat were not only entertaining, with their descriptions of illusory supernatural elements, but were also loaded with important guidelines for the Malay audience. This indirectly proved that the Malay authors, who were rich in wisdom, produced ‘literature that reflected the national culture’.

**Keywords:** Ethics, nurturing children, Malay Hikayat, *Tajus Salatin*, literary self-awareness.

### INTRODUCTION

‘The deed of the reed pen’ refers to the Malay literary activities that took root following the arrival of Islam to this region (Braginsky, 1989; 1993:1). From this point onwards, the Malay community began to be aware of the importance of literature in their lives, and this was termed by Braginsky as literary self-awareness (1993; 1998; 2001). Several criteria must be fulfilled in the production of a literary work to enhance that ‘literary awareness’ in terms of its objectives, purpose, essence, nature and type, so as to make the *modus operandi* for the creation of a literary work more apparent. Braginsky (2004: 1-2) stated that if the Javanese could be so proud of the cultural beauty of their temples as to use it as a measure of the greatness of their civilization, then the Malays must be far superior in terms of their intellectualism because they were able to produce between 8,000 to 10,000 manuscripts in Jawi during their heyday. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1972:49) acknowledged that Islam was a religion that was responsible for triggering

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a ‘spiritual revolution’ that changed the worldview (*weltanschauung*) and the Malay psyche from the old to the new, from fairy tales to reality, from the traditional to the modern, based on rationalism, individualism and internationalism, starting from the 14<sup>th</sup> century AD. As such, all written works, including high literature or palace literature, and all written manuscripts, were inspired by the Malay mind and were invaluable. As a consequence, several centres of knowledge were erected, mostly around the palace, such as in Pasai, Melaka, Aceh, and Riau (just to mention a few), with the ruler as the main patron. These glorious centres of knowledge invited interactions with the outside world, such as between the Arabs and Persians and with India, until they spurred advancements in the writing of Malay manuscripts. As a result, the corpus of Malay Literature was coloured by various genres such as books, stories about prophets and Islamic heroes, historiography, legislations, epics and so on, which, on the whole, did not divert from that literary self-awareness.

In order to provide that ‘literary self-awareness’ in their compositions, the Malay authors incorporated elements that were intended to educate or instruct into their works. For example, the Malay Hikayat, as a genre in the corpus of Traditional Malay Literature, performed the dual function of entertaining and instructing their audiences simultaneously.

Based on this ‘dual function’ concept, some colonial scholars such as Wilkinson, Crawford, Winstedt, Bottoms and several others looked down on the ‘literary’ worth of Malay Literature. They believed that the Malay authors were unable to differentiate between science and fiction, fact and illusion. In denouncing the Malay style of writing, Wilkinson (1907:9) stated,

“[...] they allow the supernatural or miraculous element to destroy the human interest in the story”.

Sometimes these Western scholars, in their attempts to understand the thinking and worldview of the society they are investigating, will allow all their evaluations to be filled with Western-centrism, which is biased against the colonized society. It is even sadder when they fail to understand that Islam is synonymous with the Malay community. According to Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1972: 62), Islam is a religion that defines the ‘Malays’, and therefore, all studies into the language and literature of the Malays should include their religion as well. This is because Islam has succeeded in changing the entire way of life of the Malays, namely:

“[...] Islam has changed not only the outer structure of the Malay-Indonesian society, but that change has even reached into the inner structure – right into its very soul”.  
(Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, 1972:22)

In this regard, the element of ‘*adab*’, which was introduced by Islam, was absorbed by the authors into their works. The works that were produced not only

helped to ease the heartache and misery of the people, but also proved to be beneficial to their audiences. As a result of the responsibility of the ‘scribes of the pen’, who had this literary self-awareness, the element of ‘*adab*’ was inserted into Traditional Malay Literature, particularly in the Malay Hikayat genre. What is more, the concept of literature is known in Islam as ‘*al-adabi*’, which means literature that comes from a delicate soul for the purpose of educating and nurturing the hearts and minds of audiences with noble values (Shafie, 1996: 118-151). This explains the great role played by ‘literature’ in the religion and society, as expressed by Syed Muhamad Naquib al-Attas (2001:47):

“Literature is called ‘*adabiyat*’ in Islam precisely because it is seen as the keeper of civilization, the collector of teachings and statements that educate the self and society with *adab* such that both are elevated to the rank of the cultured man (*insan adabi*) and society.”

In this regard, the key to ensuring the welfare and happiness of man is the preservation of ‘*adab*’ which must be nurtured with lessons (education) so that an individual will thrive in this life (Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas 2001:54). The concept of ‘*adab*’ contains ‘a true and perfect knowledge’ (‘*ilm*’) that is practised sincerely (‘*amal*’) and in accordance with the Sunnah of Nabi Muhammad s.a.w. (Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas 1980:35). Hence, the correct definition of ‘*adab*’ according to Islam is:

“*Adab* is the recognition and acknowledgement of the reality that knowledge and being are ordered hierarchically according to their various grades and degrees of rank, and of one’s proper place in relation to that reality, and to one’s physical, intellectual and spiritual capacities and potentials”. (Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas 1980:27)

Based on this definition, it is obvious that ‘*adab*’ is very important in the life of mankind, so much so that there is a genre for *Adab* Literature in the corpus of Traditional Malay Literature for educating and nurturing the hearts and minds of audiences with noble values. Some elements of ‘*adab*’ covering governance and family life, with Islam as the main pillar, were outlined for institutions. For example, the books *Tajus Salatin* and *Bustanus Salatin* served as a guide for the Malay rulers in carrying out the procedures of governance. However, among the many chapters in *Tajus Salatin* that deal with the ‘*adab*’ of governance, there is one special chapter that deals specifically with the ‘*adab (ethics)*’ of nurturing children’. This is Chapter Fourteen (14), which specifically states the ethics that must be observed by parents towards their children from the time they are young until they become adults.

Therefore, this working paper focused on two main objectives. The first objective was to identify the ‘ethics of nurturing children’ in *Tajus Salatin*, while the second objective was to compare these with works from the Malay Hikayat genre. The justification for selecting *Tajus Salatin* for comparison with the Malay

Hikayat genre with regard to the ‘ethics of nurturing children’ is that both of them are ‘high literature’, ‘palace literature’ and ‘written literature’. Furthermore, the Malay Hikayat feature the journey of the royal children from childhood to adulthood, as they go through various obstacles and challenges along the path of life. Thus, it was only fair that Chapter 14 of *Tajus Salatin* (*adab memelihara anak*) be compared with the Malay Hikayat so that the continuity between the two genres could be proven and the Malay Hikayat could be directly promoted as a genre that not only displayed the imagination of the authors but the ‘reality’ of life in the society, which can serve as a lesson.

### **THE ETHICS OF ‘NURTURING CHILDREN’ IN TRADITIONAL MALAY LITERATURE**

‘As mentioned in the book *Adab al-Walid*, children are a gift from Allah Ta’ala to parents. For that reason, anyone who is bestowed with that gift should nurture that gift in truth and not betray that trust. As Bukhari said, “The child is also a gift to parents. Hence, this must always be borne in mind by the one who is in possession of the gift.” (*Tajus Salatin* 1992:146)

Chapter 14 in *Tajus Salatin* speaks about ‘nurturing children’, which is very important in the Malay family system. Furthermore, the term used is ‘nurturing’ and not ‘looking after or bringing up’ children. ‘Nurturing’ is defined in the *Kamus Dewan* (2007:1165) as “defending, looking after, treating, [...], saving, protecting from danger”. Meanwhile, ‘nurturing’ in the English language is derived from the words ‘nurse’ or ‘nurture’, and is defined in *The Chambers Dictionary* (2001:1113-1114) as

“upbringing; rearing; training; someone who or that which feeds, rears, tends, saves, fosters, or anything that preserves in any desired condition’.

Thus, the reference to ‘nurturing children’ in Chapter 14 of the book *Tajus Salatin* means fulfilling all the rights of children accordingly, which included, at that time, defending, maintaining, monitoring and protecting them properly from childhood to adulthood. As noted in *Tajus Salatin* (1992:147), children are given in trust to be nurtured. Children should be given their rights, be brought up properly, and it should always be borne in mind that they “[...] replace the life and preserve the name of their parents, who must do all they can to nurture them”. The importance of taking care of what has been entrusted by Allah s.w.t. is viewed seriously by the Malay community, so much so that the term ‘nurturing children’ keeps appearing in several genres in Traditional Malay Literature.

According to a report from the *Malay Concordance Project* undertaken by Ian Proudfoot from the Australian National University together with several other scholars from throughout the world, 53 manuscripts were found with the term ‘*memelihara anak*’ (nurturing children) out of 150 Traditional Malay Literature

manuscripts that were studied covering ‘*memeliharakan anak*’ (to nurturing children), ‘*memeliharakan anak-anaknya*’ (to nurturing his children), ‘*memelihara anak-anakku*’ (nurturing my children), ‘*memelihara anakku*’ (nurturing my child) and ‘*memelihara anaknya*’ (nurturing his child). The table below proves that there are twenty-five (25) sentences from various genres in Traditional Malay Literature that used the term ‘*memelihara anak*’, seven (7) sentences that used the term ‘*memeliharakan anak-anak*’, three (3) sentences that used the term ‘*memeliharakan anak-anaknya*’, six (6) sentences that used the term ‘*memelihara anakku*’, and five (5) manuscripts with the words ‘*memeliharakan anaknya*’.

No.	Term	Total
1.	<i>Memeliharakan anak (To nurturing children)</i>	25
2.	<i>Memeliharakan anak-anak (To nurturing children)</i>	7
3.	<i>Memeliharakan anak-anaknya (To nurturing his children)</i>	3
4.	<i>Memeliharakan anakku (To nurturing my child)</i>	6
5.	<i>Memeliharakan anaknya (To nurturing his child)</i>	12
Total		53

For example, the historiographical work, *Sulalatus Salatin (Sejarah Melayu)* (1997:48), explained about ‘*memeliharakan anak*’, where it mentioned that Sultan Abdul Malik al-Salleh expressed the wish that his two officials, Sidi Ali Ghiatuddin and Sidi Samayuddin, would help to raise his two children after his death, as in the excerpt below:

‘Then, he said to Sidi Ali Ghiatuddin and Sidi Samayuddin, “My brothers, take care to nurture both our children and don’t allow them to offend one another, and may you never switch your loyalty to both my children, and may you never bow down to any other ruler except my two sons.”

Malay historiographical words, such as *Tuhfat al-Nafis* (1991:184) by Raja Ali Haji also used the term ‘*memelihara anak*’ to describe the act of looking after a child from infancy to adulthood, namely, “Thereupon, according to the tale, Princess Janilan raised Mr. Pung’s child [...]”. In fact, the term ‘*memelihara anak*’ was mentioned three (3) times in *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, and it finally ended with the mandate that a child ‘replaces the lives of both his parents’ and ‘a child keeps alive the name of his parents’. This gives the impression that the author of *Tuhfat al-Nafis* also referred to Chapter 14 of *Tajus Salatin* by highlighting these two phrases that ‘a child’ is ‘a reflection of the dignity’ and ‘self-esteem of both his parents’, as in the excerpt below:

“[...] bring up their children with care and remind themselves that the children replace their lives and it is the children who keep their name alive [...]” (*Tajus Salatin* 1992: 147)

“[...] with care and remind themselves that because the children replace their lives and it is the children who keep their name alive, therefore, they have to raise their children. First, they have to nurture their children the way anyone with children would do so. The father should ensure that all the rights are bestowed on the children, namely with regard to six matters [...]” (Tuhfat al-Nafis 1991:147)

‘Memelihara anak’ (nurturing children) is also mentioned in the Malay Epic Literature in *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiyyah* (1975:17) with the phrases, “Because there is nothing better than nurturing daughters for their husbands, as in this world only the best women are married!” and “In five years’ times, I will be raising the child of my brother, Zain al-Abidin, then I can bid farewell!” (*Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiyyah* 1975:322). The appearance of ‘the ethics of nurturing children’ in several works in Traditional Malay Literature proved the importance of this knowledge for those who are parents.

As stipulated in *Surah Luqman* in the *Al-Quran*, ‘children’ are a great gift from Allah s.w.t. Therefore, parents should also be grateful to Allah s.w.t. for this blessing and ‘nurture their children’ as best they can according to the teachings of Islam. The rights of children, such as the right to knowledge, must be taught regardless of their age, as mentioned in *Surah Luqman* (31:16-17):

‘(Luqman said), “O my son! Indeed, if there is (a deed) as heavy as a mustard seed, and if it were in a rock or in the sky, Allah will certainly give it (reward). Verily, Allah is the All Gentle and All Knowing. O my son! Perform your prayers and enjoin (the people) to do what is right, and forbid (them) from doing what is dishonourable, and be patient over what befalls you, for indeed, that too is an important matter” ‘.

Hence, this study examined Chapter Fourteen (14) of *Tajus Salatin* with regard to ‘the ethics of nurturing children’. This was such a special topic that a whole chapter was dedicated to it in the *Adab* Literature. Clearly, the family institution was an important element in ensuring harmony in the life of an individual, especially for a ruler, who was the main target of this literary work. Chapter Fourteen (14) of *Tajus Salatin* was compared to several selected works from the Malay Hikayat so as to prove the importance of this constitutional work and, at the same time, to highlight the greatness of the Malay Hikayat as a genre that is full of benefits and knowledge, rather than merely one that is an exposure to “pleasure as a relief from pain”.

#### **THE ADAB OF ‘NURTURING CHILDREN’ IN *TAJUS SALATIN* AND THE MALAY HIKAYAT**

Children are priceless gifts from Allah s.w.t. in the family institution. Since they function to connect the generations, ‘children’ should be educated and given proper guidance because their behaviour reflects the personality of their parents and the family they come from. *Surah al-Anfal* (8:27) states, as below, that ‘children’ are given on trust by Allah s.w.t., and man is prohibited from betraying this trust:

“O ye who believe, do not betray Allah and His Messenger, and also do not betray the trust given to you, while you know of it”.

Thus, it comes as no surprise that *Tajus Salatin*, which is a guide on governance for rulers, included a special chapter on ‘nurturing children’ together with other ethics that must be observed by the Malay rulers throughout their reign. The author, Bukhari al-Jauhari, used the *Quran* and the hadith of the Prophet as his main references in this constitutional book. *Tajus Salatin* is generally divided into three main sections that are covered by twenty-four (24) chapters, namely:

1. The history of mankind, the world and its creation as well as the concept of monotheism.
2. Governance procedures, the concept of justice, and constitutional ethics.
3. Education in various sciences.

This study only focused on Chapter Fourteen (14), which specifically refers to the procedures for ‘nurturing children’, which served to guide the lives of the rulers and the Malay community. *Tajus Salatin* (1997:147) described the importance of preserving the trust given by Allah s.w.t. as follows:

“[...] children are sent from Allah to parents. For that reason, anyone who has been blessed with such a gift should nurture it in the truth and not betray that trust. [...] they must nurture their children with care and remind themselves that children replace their lives and it is through the children that their name lives on, so all they can do is to nurture them”.

The heavy responsibility of raising children is stressed by Islam as a serious test that must be undertaken with patience by parents. Love and attention must be emphasized in a family because ‘children’ are a ‘treasure that cannot be neglected’, and Allah s.w.t. will test every one of His servants through this gift that He has bestowed, as stated in Surah *al-Anfal* (8:28):

“And know that your possessions and your children are only given as a test, and surely with Allah there is a great reward”.

In that regard, *Tajus Salatin* underlines six (6) rights of children that must be fulfilled in implementing the ethics of ‘nurturing’ bestowed by Allah s.w.t. to rulers especially and to the Malay community generally, as follows:

1. Once she has given birth to a child, the mother must cleanse the child and clothe him, and then recite the *azan* in his right ear and the *qamat* in his left ear.
2. After seven (7) days, everyone should be invited to a feast and his hair must be shaved.
3. When the boy reaches the age of six (6) years, he must be circumcised and purified, and he must be taught the ethics and right behaviour that will earn him a good name.

4. When the boy reaches the age of seven (7) years, he must sleep separately and must be taught to say his prayers.
5. When the boy reaches the age of thirteen (13) years, he must be instructed to pray. If he neglects his prayers, then he should be punished.
6. When the boy reaches the age of seventeen (17) or sixteen (16) years, then he should be given a wife.

The Malay Hikayat through *Hikayat Musang Berjanggut* proved that the issue of ‘nurturing children’ was a responsibility that was taken seriously, even when it concerned the raising of ‘adopted children’. The responsibility of fulfilling the trust of Allah s.w.t. was perfectly exemplified by Raja Shahariman Syah as ‘balancing a full pot of oil’ to ensure ‘his adopted son’, Kamalul Arifin, would receive the proper love, attention, care and upbringing before he stepped into adulthood, as stated in the excerpt below:

“His Majesty adopted Kamalul Arifin when he was still small, and he was so dear to the king that he was given the best nurturing, with a nanny to attend to his daily needs. Then, as the days turned into months, and the months into years, Kamalul Arifin gradually grew up and his appearance became increasingly beautiful, and his behaviour became ever sweeter.” (*Hikayat Musang Berjanggut* 1965:1-2).

A review of Chapter Fourteen (14) of *Tajus Salatin* revealed that the rights and ‘ethics of nurturing children’ begin when the child is still a baby and ends when he marries. For example, clause one (1) states, ‘Once she has given birth to a child, the mother must cleanse and clothe him, and then recite the *azan* in his right ear and the *qamat* in his left ear.’ This is a procedure that is observed in the institution of the family in Islam each time there is a birth, especially with regard to hygiene, as evidenced by the instruction to ‘clean the child’. Then, the act of reciting the *azan* or *qamat* to the baby is one that is prescribed in Islam so that the first sounds heard by the baby are ‘words of praise to the One who created him,’ Allah the Almighty. *Syair Siti Zubaidah Perang China* (1991:5) included this act as one the priorities highlighted in the ceremony to celebrate the birth of a son to Raja Kembayat Negara, as below:

“The umbilical cord was cut and the child was sprinkled  
 Bathed at the golden shrine  
 Welcomed in noble fabrics  
 Presented to the minister’s wife”.

Then, as a sign of gratitude for the blessings of Allah s.w.t., the king, as the leader of the government, celebrated his joy by giving a feast for all his subjects. This was the way the rulers in the ancient days shared their gratitude and happiness over the birth of a prince or princess with the people. The Folk Literature genre



such as *Hikayat Malim Deman* (1998:197) described the merry atmosphere at the festivities in the traditional Malay community when the whole society was included, regardless of their race, where “The lame came on crutches, the blind groped their way, the deaf constantly asked, the small pushed themselves, those who were hemmed in shoved their way, the short ones tried to climb [...]”.

This was consistent with item number two (2) in *Tajus Salatin*, which mentioned, “After seven (7) days, everyone should be invited to a feast and his hair must be shaved,” as proven in *Syair Siti Zubaidah Perang China* (1991:6), as follows:

“Then, they proceeded to the royal ballroom  
Where the whole kingdom was treated to a feast  
Pious *imams* were urged to seek  
Donations to charity from everyone”.

The circumcision of children on reaching the age of six (6) years was mentioned in *Tajus Salatin* through item number three (3), namely, ‘When the boy reaches the age of six (6) years, he must be circumcised and purified, and he must be taught the ethics and right behaviour that will earn him a good name’. This was consistent with *Surah Luqman* (31:12-19) in the *Quran* regarding the responsibility of parents to educate their children to always ‘do well and shun evil’ in life. Therefore, the age of six years is the best age to teach the ethics that are practised by the Malay community in line with “Islam being the way of life’. At this stage, children can easily absorb all the good knowledge and advice from their parents, who are their best ‘role models’. For example, *Hikayat Inderaputera* describes how children at this age should not be allowed out on their own because it is said that they ‘lack discretion’. The author actually wants to emphasize that at this age, children are usually unable to control their behaviour and attitudes. Children at this age are over-expressive and prone to tantrums, and should be patiently trained to control the way they express their dissatisfaction, especially in public, as stated in *Hikayat Inderaputera* (1975:7), ‘Then said the witch, [...] “All along, I did not lead him because he is still a child and lacks discretion”’. Accordingly, in keeping with efforts to raise children with noble values, *Syair Siti Zubaidah Perang China* (1991:6) describes how Raja Kembayat Negara carefully named his adopted son, Zainal Abidin, in accordance with item three (3) in *Tajus Salatin*, as follows:

“His Majesty smiled with joy  
As his son was closely observed  
Then he bestowed him with a name  
‘Zainal Abidin’ was his name

Item four (4) in *Tajus Salatin* states that, ‘When the boy reaches the age of seven (7) years, he must sleep separately and must be taught to say his prayers’.

This is consistent with the command of Allah in *Surah Taha* (20:132) of the *Quran*, which notes the importance of teaching and cultivating the habit of prayer in children, namely, “And enjoin your family to pray and to be patient in fulfilling it.” On reviewing the poem *Siti Zubaidah Perang China* (1991:11), it was found that Raja Kembayat Negara endeavoured to ‘nurture his son’. He equipped his son with knowledge of the hereafter, and taught him to recognise the Creator and to love the religion. Priority was given to the study of the *Quran* to acquire knowledge of its contents so as to directly resort to prayers and to be careful of one’s behaviour. The excerpt below proves this item:

“When his son was six years’ old  
He was taught the ways of a young nobleman  
By an uncle who was an official  
There he was told by his father to study

He studied for a whole year  
Until the *Quran* was sealed within him  
He was taught the texts and grammar  
Until he understood everything (*Syair Siti Zubaidah* 1991:11)

The importance of nurturing a child from a store of religious knowledge was also mentioned in *Hikayat Inderaputera*. Obviously, compositions in the category of transition literature, which are packed with a mix of Hindu and Islamic elements, also featured the demand for the main character to ‘study the *Quran*’. Inderaputera was said to have studied the *Quran* for seven years so that he would be able to truly master and understand the contents of the holy book of Islam, as in the following passage (*Hikayat Inderaputera*, 1975:3):

“Thereupon, after about seven years, Inderaputera already knew the *Quran*, and Maharaja Bikrama Buspa became even fonder of his son, and couldn’t bear to be away from his son, even for a moment [...]”

The importance for individuals of the Islamic faith to study the *Quran* was also framed in the Malay Hikayat. In *Hikayat Bayan Budiman*, Khojah Maimun was dispatched by his father to a missionary named Sabian so that he could be guided in the proper learning of the *Quran*. This is because when a child is able to master the *Quran*, his life will be secure and his future will be blessed. For example, the passage below (*Hikayat Bayan Budiman* 2016:1-2) clearly describes the importance of knowledge according to the perspective of the traditional society, which adhered to the teachings of Islam:

“Having reached the age of five years, Khojah Maimun was of good character and wisdom. Khojah Maimun was then handed over by his father to be taught by the *imam*, Sabian. Sometime later, Khojah Maimun knew the *Quran* and was very eloquent and was filled with knowledge.”

Since most of the main characters, who are children of the king, were equipped with knowledge of the *Quran* from a young age, there wasn't a time when they had to be forced to perform their prayers or had to be 'punished' if they failed to fulfil the command of Allah s.w.t. On the whole, the main characters prayed freely without being forced to do so because the study of the *Quran* itself had endowed them with an awareness of the importance of prayer in the life of every servant of Allah s.w.t. The greatness of the religious knowledge implanted in the main characters from childhood gave them a desire to do those things that would win them eternal rewards such as the recital of the *Quran* during their free time. This was consistent with item five (5) in Chapter 14 of *Tajus Salatin*, which states, 'When the boy reaches the age of thirteen (13) years, he must be instructed to pray. If he neglects his prayers, then he should be punished'. Obviously, in the Malay Hikayat, one does not come across any of the main characters who neglected to pray, what more who was punished for neglecting to perform that obligation. Instead, they continued to reap rewards for reciting the *Quran*, as mentioned in the poem, *Syair Siti Zubaidah Perang China* (1991:70-71) below:

Siti was silent, no words were spoken  
 then Siti, the most beautiful, began to pray  
 on finishing her prayers, she sat  
 On the couch and read the *Quran*. [...]  
 There were moments when His Majesty stopped  
 On hearing the voice of Siti  
 His Majesty listened carefully,  
 To make sure she was reading the *Quran*.

The final item, *i.e.* item 7 in Chapter 14 of *Tajus Salatin* was in relation to the need for parents to find a 'life partner' for their son when he reaches the age of 17 years. As written in the book, when a son reaches the age of sixteen or seventeen years, then a wife should be given to him. The father should hold the son's hand while giving the following advice:

"My son, I have nurtured you and taught you the ethics and knowledge, and I have now given you a wife. Therefore, release me from all my obligations to you and may Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala protect me from all evil in this world and from torment in the hereafter".  
 (*Tajus Salatin* 1992:146-147).

This is because at this age, the sex hormones in a man's body approaches maturity after going through the process of 'puberty' in early adolescence (Ollendick and Schroeder 2003:529). At this age also, humans undergo sexual maturity until they are capable of producing offspring to extend their lineage. Thus, legitimate intimate relations should be encouraged between the two different sexes through 'marriage'. The uniqueness of this stage in the course of human life was described by Sisk and Zehr (2005:163), as follows:

“Puberty is the period during which an individual becomes capable of sexually reproducing. Adolescence is the period between childhood and adulthood encompassing not only reproductive maturation, but also cognitive emotional and social maturation. A biological hallmark of puberty is the elevated secretion of gonadal steroid hormones, which produce the overt signs of reproductive maturation such as breast development or the appearance of facial hair. A biological hallmark of adolescence is the remarkable modelling of cortical and limbic circuits, which leads to the acquisition of adult cognition, decision making strategies and social behaviours”.

Furthermore, Surah *An-Nur* (24:32) in the *Quran* mentions the subject of hastening the marriages of those believers who have ‘come of age’, namely, “Marry off your children (who are unmarried) and those among your servants who have reached their time for marriage, be they men or women”. In this regard, the Malay authors did not consider this to be a ‘trivial’ matter, as proven by the works in the Malay Hikayat in particular. For example, the poem *Siti Zubaidah Perang China* (1991:28) describes how Raja Kembayat Negara was so concerned about his son’s growth into adulthood that he made efforts to find him a life partner. From this poem, it is estimated that Sultan Zainal Abidin was sixteen years old when he ascended the throne, and for the Malay community, it was the best time for him to take a ‘wife’, so much so that Raja Kembayat Negara was said to be filled with anxiety, as in the excerpt below:

“After a period of time  
Three years after his inauguration  
Then it came into the mind of his father  
To seek a wife for his son. [...]  
The king then said to his son  
“My son, the soul of your father,  
You need a wife, soul of your father,  
Your father will seek if there is one”.

Examples from several other texts in the Malay Hikayat genre in relation to item 7 in Chapter 14 of *Tajus Salatin* are as given in the table below:

No.	Name of Work/Text	Evidence from Excerpt
1.	<i>Hikayat Musang Berjanggal</i> (1965:2).	“Suddenly, the king spoke to his son. He said, “My son, Kamalul Arifin, your father and mother are truly happy and thankful for Allah’s blessings, for we can see that our son has grown up and is well-versed in all kinds of knowledge, and has completed all his studies. Therefore, we have both agreed to find you a life partner, <i>i.e.</i> one who is pleasing and suitable for you. Hence, we feel that you should be left to choose for yourself whether from among the daughters of the nobles, kings, ministers, commanders and so forth in this state. Once I have your agreement, then I can fulfil my wishes for you”.

*Contd. table 1*

No.	Name of Work/Text	Evidence from Excerpt
2.	<i>Hikayat Musang Berjanggut</i> (1965:13).	“It can be said that Dang Seri Arif Laksana was a maiden who was pampered by her parents. When Dang Seri Arif Laksana was just fifteen years old, she was ‘like a flower that was just beginning to bloom’, and many of the young sons of the farmers tried to woo this winsome maiden”.
3.	<i>Hikayat Bayan Budiman</i> (2016:2)	“When Khojah Maimun was fifteen years old, he was betrothed to the daughter of a very rich merchant in the country of Ajam, and the name of this daughter, who was very comely in appearance, was Bibi Zainab. Hence, Khojah Maimun was married to the merchant’s daughter. Then, Khojah Maimun began his courtship with his wife, Bibi Zainab”.

The table above proves that the Malay authors based their creative works on the religion, customs and conventions of their community. That was why the authors repeatedly mentioned the age of fifteen to seventeen years as the best age for parents to find a life partner for their child. Hence, it comes as no surprise that most of the main characters in the Malay Hikayat right up to the ‘Framed Literature’ (*Cerita Berbingkai*) such as *Hikayat Bayan Budirman* followed the same vein to coincide with the requirements of Islam, which is the religion of the Malay community in this country.

## CONCLUSION

Children are priceless gifts from Allah s.w.t. to all parents. It cannot be denied that they play an important role in lighting up a household by their presence. As such, they should be provided with good care and education based on the *Quran* and *Sunnah*, as have been widely applied by the authors of Traditional Malay Literature in general and the Malay Hikayat in particular. The two objectives of this study have been fulfilled, namely, to highlight the seven (7) items in relation to the ‘ethics of nurturing children’ in the *Adab* Literature (*Tajus Salatin*) as well as to make a comparison between Chapter 14 and several selected works in the Malay Hikayat.

It was concluded from the study that the Malay authors succeeded in carrying out their responsibility to create literary awareness because all the items in Chapter 14 of *Tajus Salatin* were found in the Malay Hikayat, which were often doubted as to their seriousness and the accuracy of their facts. Evidently, the Malay Hikayat were not meant to merely entertain through a display of illusory supernatural elements, but were loaded with an important mandate to guide the Malay audience and were written by Malay authors who were filled with wisdom. Hence, it is true that, ‘Literature is a reflection of the culture of a people’ and is not just creative works without any ‘literary awareness’.

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