

Research Notes

Islamic literature and *Sastera Islami*: A Conceptual Comparison

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Abstract: A comparative analysis of the Middle Eastern and Malay Islamic literatures shows that in both traditions, there is an emphasis on morality and good values. However, the discussion on Islamic literature in the Middle East is more philosophically-rooted compared to the Malay literature which is in tune with Malay tradition and is focussed on the daily necessities of life.

The purpose of this study is to analyse the conceptual thinking underlying Islamic literature as a discourse in the Middle East and Malaysia. It deduces the criteria for classifying literature as Islamic from the writings of literary scholars like Sayyid Quṭb and Muḥammad Quṭb. This is followed by an analysis of the writings of Malay literary scholars and their conceptions of Islamic literature. The works of writers from these two regions are compared and significant similarities and differences are briefly noted in the concluding section of this paper.

***Al-Adab*: An Overview**

Al-adab, the Arabic term for literature, is a homonym in the sense that it refers to both literature and behaviour. However, the general understanding of *al-adab* throughout the history of Arabic literature

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has continued to indicate the meaning of didacticism and congruity (*al-tahdhīb wa al-nizām*).¹ Al-Zabīdī's dictionary, *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, defines *al-adab* as “[the quality] which differentiates a writer from the common people. The writer of literature, the *adīb*, enlightens or directs people towards good and ethical behaviour and discourages them from immorality.”² In *al-Miṣbāḥ*, *al-adab* is defined as the teaching of spiritual exercise and ethical behaviour.³ Abū Zaid al-Anṣārī regards literature as a good exercise, which brings benefits to the people. Al-Khafājī, on the other hand, defines *al-adab* as good ethics and an act of kindness. According to Al-Khafājī, *al-adab*'s application to Arabic studies originates with the beginning of Islam.⁴ A similar view is held by Ṭāha Ḥusayn, according to whom, there is neither mention of the term *al-adab* in any accurate text from Arabic pre-Islamic times nor referred to in the Qurʾān. Ṭāha Ḥusayn also indicates that the term *al-adab* was unfamiliar and was never employed [in a text] before Islam.⁵ However, Naṣr al Dīn argues that the term *al-adab* was in fact employed in texts during the pre-Islamic times and that it contained a moral meaning.⁶ The didactic and moral meaning of the term *al-adab* is also generally associated with the ḥadīth, which the Prophet (SAS) reportedly said: “I have been cultured/educated by my God and how good is my education.”⁷ During the time of the Prophet (SAS) and throughout the history of Islam, the term *al-adab* was characterised with the Islamic cognition, which was directed towards educating the individual and developing moral values.

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn asserts that the term *al-adab* was used during the Umayyad period and apparently it was commonly associated with *al-taʿlīm bi ṭarīq al-riwāyat* (informal education through narrating). Naṣr al Dīn (1998) shares a similar view and maintains that the educative/didactic and moralistic objectives that were initially embodied in the term *al-adab* were reaffirmed during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods.⁸ *Al-adab* was a term for poetry (*al-shʿir*), genealogy (*al-ansāb*), reportage on war (*al-akhbār*) and bibliographies (*ayyām al-nās*). Subsequently, the study of linguistics emerged and individual studies were collected and put down in writing and [specific] principles and axioms were set up on the basis of these studies. All of which were regarded as components of *al-adab*. During the period of the Abbasid, with the beginning of penmanship (*al-kitābah*), *al-adab* encompassed the art of narration.

Yet another “genre” emerged during the Umayyad period, in the form of literary criticism in the manner applied by al Jāhiz, al-Mubarrid, Ibn Qutaybah and Ibn Salām in their writings. As a result, *al-adab* has since been identified with whatever was associated to poetry and narration including the study of aesthetics in poetry and narration.

Al-Adab al-Islāmī

Sayyid Quṭb has offered two definitions of the term *al-adab* or literature. First, he defines *al-adab* as a literary expression, which derives from a primal creative intuition or spirit endowed with senses and passions. This literary expression is later revealed in an inspirational and revealing illustration. To Quṭb, *al-adab* is “a primal creative intuition” which expresses the “enigmatic reality” of life.

Quṭb argues that this “enigmatic reality of life” derives from an individual’s particular views or conception and perception about life and from the obligations or commitments, which the individual possesses towards the universe and towards other human beings. Because Islam has its own particular *taṣawwur* (world-view), it has specific values and characteristics. Obviously, these values when applied in literature will produce a literary expression distinct from the one produced with a non-Islamic worldview. Consequently, Sayyid Quṭb identifies the characteristics of Islamic world-view as follows:

1. Divine sovereignty. Islamic literature portrays the function of man as that of a “servant” and a vicegerent. As a servant, man must submit totally to Allah (SWT), and as a vicegerent, he must enjoy good and prohibit evil.
2. *Al-ḥarakiyyah* (movement/progress) and *al-thabāt* (permanence). Islam not only permits but also encourages movement and change, as long as they are within its own framework and around its fixed axis (*miḥwar thābit*). The writer of Islamic literature is, therefore, free to write about all issues but they must adhere to Islamic values.
3. Comprehensive. Islamic literature encompasses all aspects of life.
4. *Al-tawāzun*. It strikes a balance between the absolute Divine will and the laws of the universe, between the dignity of man and his

role as a vicegerent of God on Earth. “There is no contradiction from an Islamic point of view, between man’s greatness, dignity, and participation and his servitude to God.” Islamic literature maintains a sense of balance between its Islamic commitment and its literary characteristics.

5. Dynamic and positive. Islamic literature is *ijābiyyah*, optimistic and constructive shunning overemphasis on the negative elements in life, such as failure and frustration.
6. Realistic. Man is not expected to do anything that is beyond his mental and physical capacity.
7. *Tawḥīd* or monotheism. Islamic literature conforms to the *tawḥīdic* paradigm proclaiming the oneness of God and the unity of creation.⁹

Based upon *al-taṣawwur al-Islāmī*, Sayyid Quṭb defines Islamic literature as a literary expression produced from a primal creative intuition, which is born in the soul of the writer as a result of an overwhelming Islamic feeling/spirit.¹⁰ While agreeing with his brother, Muḥammad Quṭb points out that being a Muslim is not sufficient to produce Islamic art and literature. He, however, argues that only a Muslim has the potential to appreciate the Islamic *taṣawwur*. At the same time, there is no harm in benefiting and acknowledging the general Islamic values shared and advocated by non-Muslim writers.¹¹

Muḥammad Quṭb defines Islamic art as “an aesthetic interpretation of the universe, life and mankind, within the Islamic world-view.”¹² Elsewhere, Muḥammad Quṭb defines Islamic literature as “a literary product which conforms and concurs with the concepts of Islam, with the values and morals of Islam, with the principles and convictions of Islam, with the Islamic vision, concerning the universe, life and mankind.” There have been several attempts by other Arab scholars to define how and what Islamic literature should be. Muḥammad Majdhūb defines *al-adab al-Islāmī* as “an artistic illustration using persuasive words.”¹³ This definition, on its own, is very general and does not specify or emphasise the Islamic world-view in literature. It exemplifies, however, the uncertainty among some Arab scholars about the nature of Islamic literature. Majdhūb’s definition was further developed by ‘Abd al Raḥmān Ra’fat al Bāshā

as “an artistic and objective illustration of the realities of life and the universe and mankind, in accordance with the Islamic concept and world view, pertaining to the principle of harmony operating in all spheres of life, between the Creator and the created, God and man.”¹⁴

Bāshā’s definition accords with Sayyid Quṭb’s interpretation of the Islamic *taṣawwūr*. It emphasises the principle of harmony in Islam whether in terms of material, spiritual, doctrinal or practical. This also supports Qutb’s view that:

Islam came to unify all powers and abilities, to fuse together spiritual aspirations and bodily desires, to harmonise their directions, and thus create a comprehensive unity in the universe, life and man.¹⁵

To ‘Imād al-Dīn Khalīl, Islamic literature is “an artistic representation, which represents the Islamic *taṣawwūr* in relation to the ultimate purpose of (human) existence.”¹⁶ Najīb al- Kaylanī reinforces Khalī by defining Islamic literature as:

An inspiring aesthetic and artistic expression. It issues from a believer [of the Islamic faith] and interprets [this believer’s Islamic interpretation] of life, mankind and the universe. It is in conformity to the Islamic conviction of the believer. It pleases [the reader] and benefits him/her. It inspires the soul and stimulates thoughts. It is prepared to meet the challenges ahead.¹⁷

Najīb gives the following characteristics of Islamic literature:

1. An artistic expression, which is beautiful, dominant and captivating.
2. It derives from a person, who is assured with faith (*īmān*).
3. It is an interpretation of life, man and the universe.
4. It is in accordance with the Islamic conviction of a Muslim.
5. It inspires happiness and enjoyment (*mut‘at*) and is beneficial.
6. It stimulates thoughts and emotions.
7. It is prepared to face the challenges and changes of life.¹⁸

The Universal League of Islamic Literature in Riyaḍ, under the supervision of Abu Hassan ‘Ali al-Nadwī (d.1999) proposed an all-inclusive definition in 1993, as “an objective artistic interpretation of the Islamic *taṣawwūr* in issues relating to mankind, life and the universe.”¹⁹

Nadwī argues that literature in Islam retains a secure and stable intention, exuberant with intense and impulsive vivaciousness and animation. It bears with it an eminent celestial revelation that is humanistic, Islamic and universal. Literature, in Nadwī's opinion, is a living object, which has an affectionate heart, and a conscious mind, sensitive, and steadfast in his faith and has an objective in life. Literature as a living object endures pain when opposed with pain and hardship and is exultant and joyful when received with joy. Nadwī argues that any literature, which does not answer to the above description, is a stilted, callous, lifeless and immobile literature.²⁰

Islamic literature, as pointed out by Muṣṭafā Ḥaḍḍārah, conveys the proper Islamic view on all that represents the universe and all that takes place in it.²¹ It is, as emphasized by Muḥammad Ḥassan Barighish, a "literature which illustrates the Islamic worldview on all aspects of life. It is literature, which upholds the Islamic view and conforms to the Islamic *shari'ah* and will not contradict Islam under any circumstance."²²

From the above discussion, it is clear that the definition given by Sayyid Quṭb is the briefest yet comprehensive. This may be due to the fact that Quṭb concentrated on encouraging Muslims to produce Islamic literature. Muḥammad Quṭb explained the definition at a great length and hence his work is considered by many to be a prime reference on the issue of Islamic art and literature. Although Muḥammad Quṭb used the term art (*fann*) and not literature (*adab*) in his discussions, he used the term art to mean literature as well.

Ḥassan Barighish, agreeing with the Quṭb brothers, was emphatic that the writer of Islamic literature must be a Muslim. Indeed, Muḥammad Quṭb had earlier stated that it is not enough to be a Muslim to produce Islamic literature, he or she must abide by *taṣawwur al-Islāmī*. Ra'fat al Bāshā places more emphasis on the emotional aspects or the internal impulsive impression of Islamic literature, whereas most of the other definitions are more inclined to indicate that Islamic literature must depict the Islamic worldview. All the scholars agree with Sayyid Quṭb's emphasis that the Islamic concept does not change with the changes in the phenomena of life and its practical conditions.

***Sastera* in Malaysia**

Sastera, the Malay term for literature, has a wide meaning. According to Ungku Maimunah, *sastera* generally connotes language that is beautiful and a content that is beneficial. Beautiful language is seen as an integral component whose presence gives validity to a text's claim to literariness. The same may be said about the Indonesian literary canon which, according to Kratz, adheres to a rather narrow concept of *belles lettres* or high literature which lays great emphasis on the use of a literary language which is more "refined" than the spoken language.²³

Kamus Dewan, the official Malay dictionary, however, confines *sastera* to a "language used in books, not everyday language." Darus Ahmad agrees and explains that "*Su*: means beautiful, good, beneficial;" *Sastera* means words or books. Therefore, *Ke-susasteraan* refers to a collection of books whose language and content are beautiful and beneficial, respectively. Abdul Rahman al Ahmadi also emphasises that *sastera* refers to a collection of good writing, with beautiful language and good content. He adds that the language employed in literature is generally artistic, and as such literature may be referred to as the artistry of language.²⁴ R.J. Wilkinson provides a better explanation of *sastera*. He argues that:

A Malay defines literary composition to be a 'stringing together' (*karangan*) of beautiful words and sayings; he describes a story as a necklace of pearls or a crown of diamonds or a garland of flowers or an ordered garden full of ponds and parterres. He does not consider the parts of a story to be mere accessories to the story as a whole; they are the pearls, while the narrative is the necessary thread.²⁵

V.I. Braginsky adds that one of the characteristics of a properly "coordinated" [Malay] literary work, and one much more important than beauty, is "benefit."²⁶ Affirming the "benefit" characteristic of Malay literary work, Muhammad Haji Salleh states that "the objective of literature is to give benefit or to profit the audience while amusing the disheartened soul."²⁷ Salleh claims that the "beauty" in Malay literary writings

seems to be a product of a long line of tradition, emerging from people of ancient times, the revered source of the good and

true. To come from the old is to come from these sources, and the elders seem to have lived around these sources of all things, including beauty and truth.... Original beauty, thus, is genuine beauty.²⁸

Sastera Islam in Malaysia

Any discussion on *Sastera Islam* should begin with Budiman Radzi's synoptic expression "Art for the sake of piety." Budiman asserts that an artist or writer should not be overpowered by art and society. Should this happen, the artist will be diverted from the path of righteousness to the path of evil, leading him/her to immorality. For Budiman, art/literature must tread on the path of righteousness and truthfulness.²⁹ H.S. Badaruddin adds by defining Islamic art and literature as art that portrays illustrations of life within the Islamic concept [worldview]. It is a beautiful proclamation about existence (*wujud*), creation (*kejadian*), life (*kehidupan*) and mankind from an Islamic point of view.³⁰

Syed Naquib al-Attas argues differently. For him, *Sastera Islam* is scientific, rational and intellectual in nature. This is in conformity with the nature of Islam as a religion, which is "characterised by its scientific literary culture." By scientific, al-Attas is referring to the psychological bearing and nature [of the literary culture], founded on a tradition of knowledge, which intently examines something with "tatatertib ilmiah" (intellectual ethics).³¹ Inspired by al-Attas, Affandi Hassan, in 1989, started working on the "*Tawhīd Approach*" in literary criticism and the "*Aesthetic-Intellectual Approach*" in literary writing and reviewing. This is obvious in Affandi's work on the concept of knowledge and intellectual literature and his emphasis on the importance of proper analysis following a scientific methodology.

Ahmad Kamal Abdullah known as Kemala asserts that writings on *Sastera Islam* are not lifeless and passive but industriously and spiritually motivated. In Kemala's opinion, *Sastera Islam* must be inventive, innovative and scientific. Kemala posits that in Islamic art, the geometrical boundaries transports the artist or those who appreciate art into a divine world in which the artist is helplessly devoted to the greatness and comprehensiveness of the Creator of this divine world.³²

Yusuf Zaki Yaakob defines *Sastera Islam* as a literature, which portrays the Islamic concept and values in life. He has also written on the relationship between religion and literature emphasising that literature should not be disassociated from religion. This is because both literature and religion emanate from the same source, sublime or virtuous feelings and awareness/consciousness. Yusof affirms that the Qur'ān, which is the main basis and source of Islam is revealed in the "Godly literary and artistic" language because literature is the expression of the "*hati nurani*" (soul). As such, he argues, religion should first be instilled into the soul and then followed by the mind.³³

In Yusof's opinion, literary works are to be evaluated in accordance to the influence they have on readers. A literary work is considered good if it is of good influence and nurtures sincerity into the reader's feelings and consciousness. In contrast, writings, which leave negative influences on the reader, are considered bad literary works irrespective of the writer's sincere intentions.³⁴ Yusof's assertion on literature as the expression of the soul (*hati nurani*), and his emphasis on the function of literature and its influence, benefit and impact on the reader concur with V. Braginsky's assertions on the three areas in the system of Classical Malay literature: the sphere of function, the sphere of advantage, and the sphere of perfecting the soul.³⁵ Within the perceptual framework that any literary activity is an *'ibādah*, an act of worship no different from prayers, fasting and the like, Shanon defines *Sastera Islam* as:

literature produced in the name of Allah and for humankind. The two expressions, 'in the name of Allah' and 'for humankind,' are closely interrelated, for when we produce literature in the name of Allah, we believe automatically, without doubt, that everything which Allah commands of us (through the Qur'ān and the Sunnah) is for the well-being and happiness of human beings. As such, we can conclude that Islamic Literature is literature in the name of Allah and for the good of all humankind.³⁶

It is interesting to note that the well known Indonesian scholar, HAMKA had made a similar statement about Islamic literature in the 1930s.

Concurrent with its cogitation with guiding readers towards the path of God, *Sastera Islam* proposes that moral clarity is a crucial

consideration. Narrative strategies and devices employed should, therefore, be geared towards highlighting the moral. In short, within the tradition of *Sastera Islam*, morals are often regarded as superior to aesthetics. On this basis, Shahnon stresses that *Sastera Islam* is an ‘*ibādah*,³⁷ a form of worship, and it is thus incumbent upon every writer to dedicate their art to truth as set down by Allah (SWT), and to guide their readers towards an awareness and understanding of this truth, a higher morality and the achievement of Allah’s grace.

Shahnon’s opinion about Islamic literature, however, is not shared by all. Rahmanmat, for instance, argues that *Sastera Islam* is literature, which depicts Islamic rituals. According to Rahmanmat, an act of worship or to serve Allah (SWT) and to produce literature are two separate issues, which are not related to one another. While worshipping is an act which is strictly devoted to Allah, literature on the other hand is produced by humans for the pleasure of humans.³⁸ Rahmanmat is a classical example of borrowing Ungku Maimunah’s expression “the literary public, [which] grappled with the idea” of *Sastera Islam*.³⁹

Rather than involving himself in the controversy, Abdullah Hussain proposes that writers should focus on themes that do not contradict the teachings of Islam and Islamic moral conduct and on themes which contain religious elements.⁴⁰ Muhammad Kamal agrees and argues that people should concentrate on how to adapt literature to the Islamic perspective. He argues that the focus should be on the Islamic commitment of the writers and their writings, in accordance with the Islamic worldview. However, he prefers the term *Sastera Islami* instead of *Sastera Islam*. The term *Islami* indicates that the author is otherwise engaged to uphold Islamic values. In other words, *sastera Islami* is a “literature engagee,” which upholds the Islamic cause and its vision of reality. It strives to revive and revitalise the nation in accordance with the Islamic worldview.⁴¹

Ismail Ibrahim affirms that *Sastera Islam* is literary writing, which is built on the [philosophy] of *tawhīd*. He concludes that a writer who has the philosophy of *tawhīd* implanted in him, is a writer who believes in Allah (SWT) and is able to instruct his mind in accordance with the teachings of Islam, and not for the sake of reputation or publicity. This is considering the fact that the evaluation [of literature] is not based on imagination and emotion. However, literary writings

are evaluated according to the writer's consciousness. In the above, lies the difference in the Islamic approach to literature.⁴² Literature, Ismail posits, is a main vehicle of thought of the people, which breaks through the boundaries of language, the colour of the skin and hair of man. Elsewhere, Ismail cites the verse from the Qur'ān (90:8-9), which reads, "Have We not created for them a pair of eyes, a tongue and a pair of lips? And We revealed to them two paths (the good and the bad)."

Ismail posits that the above Qur'ānic saying reminds man of the endowments God has given him. The eyes, the tongue and the lips are the most valuable things that God has bestowed on man. A pair of eyes that are alert and sharp, a tongue that is fluent and a pair of lips that is creative will bring forth finesse [artfulness] from man, whether in the form of words or expressions of feelings through writing and painting. Thus, man is also reminded of the two paths, the rightful one and the wrong one, that exist in front of him. Because of that all artistic expressions that are made should contain everything that is good and pure in order to show gratitude to Allah (SWT) for all those that He has bestowed upon man. Man's expression of art must evolve around high moral and spiritual values, which can raise the position, self and soul of man to a high level, the level of *taqwā* (fear and respect for God), *īmān* (faith), *ma'rūf* (benevolence) and good deeds. Ismail further affirms that expressions of art that are not based on strong *taqwā* or *īmān* will manifest themselves in a questionable form due to the context of time. It will only meet the satisfaction of lust and worldly benefits. This will bring destruction to life, create problems in the society, and give rise to feelings of anxiety, fear and all sorts of uneasiness in man. In creativity and writing, a writer should conform to Allah (SWT)'s approval; establishing truth and justice as shown by Him should be his first objective. All creative works done in the name of Allah (SWT) will themselves turn out to benefit man and his welfare.

On the subject of beauty in literature, Ismail states that literature is synonymous with beauty, and beauty in turn is relative in nature, it can thus be interpreted as best as possible in many ways according to different inclinations and viewpoints. A saying of the Prophet (SAS) according to Ismail, suggests that indeed Allah (SWT) is most beautiful and He loves beauty. Based on this concept, it can then be

concluded that beauty in literature is focussed on the beauty of truth and justice, which has a direct link with the heart and mind of man who has faith and whose source is the *‘aqīdah*, which is true and real. Furthermore, Ismail asserts, beauty in all forms that is found in the world and this life is the manifestation and splinters of the real beauty possessed by Allah (SWT), the Absolute and the Perfect.⁴³

Another academician, Mana Sikana, defines *Sastera Islam* as literature, which promotes piety and godliness in life. It emphasises the good values in society, in accordance with the teachings of the Qur’ān and Sunnah. Mana Sikana proposes that *Sastera Islam* is “*sastera pengabdian*,” literature, which is devoted to serving Allah (SWT). It reflects the *taqwā* way of life, which emphasises righteousness in the actions of the *‘ummah* in accordance with the Qur’ān and the Sunnah.⁴⁴ Mana cites Maḥmūd ‘Abbas al ‘Aqqād as stating that Islamic literature is literary writing, which portrays the Islamic concept and value of life. It guides [the reader] towards the development of the human civilisation and culture. Mana further posits that *Sastera Islam* actually is an expression of the [daily] life of the Muslim individual and society. It is created for the sake of obtaining Allah (SWT)’s blessings. *Sastera Islam* is also intended to offer an interpretation of life and endow meaning to life. He proposes two categories of *Sastera Islam*. The first category consists of writings, which conform to the Islamic concept of literature. The second category consists of writings, which illustrate some elements or substances of Islamic writing.⁴⁵

Sastera Islam, according to Shafie Abu Bakar, is literature produced by Muslims in accordance with Islamic values. It is based upon the philosophy of *tawḥīd*. It is an emanation of the Islamic culture and is the creative product of a Muslim writer as he designates expressions as beautiful as can be in the most conceivable and feasible artistic form. Shafie posits that assimilated in *Sastera Islam* is the humanitarian, spiritual, universal and aesthetic aspects/factors [of literature].⁴⁶ Shafie emphasises the importance of the writer being a Muslim.

Other Malay scholars, who tried to define *Sastera Islam*, include Baha Zain, Rahman Shaari, Ismail Hamid and Rahmanmat. Baha Zain defines *Sastera Islam* as a literature, which is in accordance with Islamic values irrespective of the writer’s faith and religion.⁴⁷

To Rahman Shaari, it is literature that has chosen Islam as the solution to all problems.⁴⁸ Ismail Hamid conceives of *Sastera Islam* to be a literature with emphasis on the importance of values in society.⁴⁹

The discussion presented thus far can be summarised by saying that the Malay literary system gives emphasis to the “beautiful and beneficial in language and content.” The Malay term *Sastera* embodies morality and good values. The Malay Islamic literature must be based upon Islamic worldview; it must be based upon the philosophy of *tawhīd*; it must be devoted to serving Allah (SWT) and promote values enshrined in the the Qur’ān and Sunnah in the society. Finally, Islamic literature must be scientific, rational and intellectual in nature.

Al-adab al-Islāmī and Sastera Islami: Concluding Observations

Islamic literature is characterised by two features. Firstly, it should conform to *al-taṣawwur al-Islāmī* and it must not be at variance with Islamic values. In order to understand and appreciate what conforms to *al-taṣawwur al-Islāmī* and what is not at variance with Islamic values, an in depth and critical understanding of Islam as *al-dīn* (the religion) and a way of life that covers all aspects of life and human interest is vital.

In both the Malay and Arabic literary traditions, morality and good values are more or less embodied in the term literature whether it be *al-adab* or *sastera*. During the Prophet’s times and throughout the Islamic period, the term *al-adab* carried the Islamic meaning, Islamic cognition, which was related to educating the individual and developing moral values. Consequently, the preoccupation of scholars in the Middle East and Malaysia in reviving Islamic literature can be seen as a “return” to the roots of *al-adab* and *sastera*, and an attempt to re-evaluate and reassess the literatures of the Muslim nations, consistent with the purpose of Islam, which Prophet Muḥammad (SAS) was sent for, to effectuate and reinstate moral values.

Even though the discussions on *Sastera Islam* in Malaysia were sparked by the worldwide Islamic resurgence especially in the Middle East, the Malay discourse has since developed and formed its own Malay nature. It is to be noted that everything in Malaysia

inherited from the past, even the Western literary theories were never adopted in its Western or foreign form. It was always “Malayised” to suit the Malay tradition and taste which is quite Islamic in nature. Acknowledging the scholarship and constructive views of scholars such as Sayyid Quṭb, Muḥammad Quṭb, ‘Imād al-Dīn Khalīl, Najīb al Kaylānī and Ṣāliḥ Ādam Bīlū, it must be stated that the discussion on Islamic literature in the Middle East have taken a somewhat philosophical direction. The tendency is to elaborate in depth on the constituents of the *al-taṣawwur al-Islāmī*. Many times the reader is left bewildered and confused by the whole discussion. *Sastera Islam* in Malaysia is more down to earth and is concerned with the daily necessities of Muslims.

Notes

1. Naṣr al Dīn Ibrāhīm. *Nahwa Itārin Islāmīyin li al-Sh‘ir al-‘Arabī* (Kuala Lumpur: Research Centre, International Islamic University Malaysia, 1998), 7.
2. Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-‘Arūs Min Jawāhir al-Qāmūs*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Al-Matbaah al-Khairiyyah, 1306), 144.
3. Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn ‘Alī al-Muqrī al-Faiyūmī, *Al-Miṣbāh al-Munīr* (Lebanon: Al-Maktab al-Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 9.
4. Cited in Al-Naḥwī, ‘Adnān ‘Alī Riḍā. *Al-Adab al-Islāmī Insāniyyatuhū wa Ālamiyyatuhū* (Riyāḍ: Dār al Naḥwī, 1994), 30.
5. Ṭāha Ḥusayn, *Min Tārīkh al-Adab al-‘Arabī*, 5th ed., vol.1 (Egypt: Dār al-‘Ilm li al- Malāyīn, 1991), 26.
6. Naṣr el Dīn Ibrāhīm, *Nahwa Itārin Islāmīyin li al-Sh‘ir al-‘Arabī*, 10.
7. Ṣaḥīḥ al Bukhārī 240/3; Ṭāha Ḥusayn, *Min Tārīkh al-Adab al-‘Arabī*, 25; Naṣr el Dīn Ibrāhīm, *Nahwa Itārin Islāmīyin li al-Sh‘ir al-‘Arabī*, 18.
8. Naṣr el Dīn Ibrāhīm, *Nahwa Itārin Islāmīyin li al-Sh‘ir al-‘Arabī*, 25- 31.
9. Sayyid Quṭb, *Khaṣā’iṣ al-Taṣawwur al-Islāmī* (Cairo: Dār al Shurūq, 1962).
10. Sayyid Quṭb, *Al-Naqd al-Adabī: Usūluhu wa manāhijuhū* (Cairo: Dār al Shurūq, 1947), 28.
11. Muḥammad Quṭb, *Manhaj al-Fann al-Islāmī* (Cairo: Dār al Shurūq, 1983), 181-183.
12. Ibid., 6.

13. Muḥammad Majdhūb, “*Al-Adab al-Islāmī*,” *Journal of al-Ba‘th al-Islāmī*, 1, no. 7 (1985): 68.
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