

CHAPTER THREE:

MALAY MALE SCHOLARS'S WRITINGS CONCERNING WOMEN IN THE 20TH CENTURY

3.1 Introduction

The role of Malay scholars in advocating women's right in the 20th century was discussed in the previous chapter which clearly showed that they make a great contribution to the Malay's women. One of the ways used by them is through their writings. Therefore, this chapter will discover their background, their writings and their contributions in advocating the emancipation of women.

Furthermore, this chapter will analyze the idea of women's emancipation by the selected Malay male scholars in their writings. Besides, this study also will examine the factors of influencing the idea of the women's emancipation and the impact of the idea will discuss at the end of this chapter.

3.2 Selected Malay Scholars in the 20th Century

Undeniably, hundreds of Malay scholars existed in the 20th century, but not all of them discussed women's issues. This study selected five important scholars and analysed their writings that put forth important discussion regarding women whether directly or indirectly. The scholars played an important role in building a culture of knowledge in the local community. They could also answer any question or solve any problem that occurred in Malaya at the time. In fact, they had their own strengths in

writing which led to successfully opening the minds of the Malay community to think, understand, and be aware of the issues surrounding the Malays and Islam especially the women's issues. Before explaining the results of their writings, details of their background are explained in sub-study 3.2.1. follow:

3.2.1 Haji Muhammad Sa'id bin Umar (1854-1932)

Haji Muhammad Sa'id bin Umar was born in Kampung Kuar, Jerlun, Kedah, in 1857 M. He received early education in Kedah from his father, a preacher known as Umar Khatib, and subsequently studied in Patani. After that, he continued his studies in Mecca. After returning to Kedah, he moved to Changkat Kerian, Perak, and founded a school where he was the teacher. Then, he returned to Kedah and served as a religious teacher in some mosques. He was then assigned to teach religious knowledge to the Royal family of Kedah where he held the position of 'Royal Teacher' (Ahmad Said, 2012). He was given the title 'Haji Sa'id Mufti' and was often the main reference on religious issues for the local community. The last position he held was as a qadi in Jitra, Kedah.

Haji Muhammad Sa'id contributed numerous writings on Islamic subjects, such as (1) *Tarjuman al-Mustafid*, a *tafsir* (Qur'anic interpretation) that was his first writing before he wrote *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*; (2) *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* is one of the writings concerning women selected for this study; (3) *Fatwa of Kedah*, a book that discusses the fatwas (a legal opinion or decree by an Islamic scholar) on the law of divorce in Kedah. Interestingly, this book is still in the custody of the Kedah state government and has never been printed until today (Sheh Yusuff & Sahad, 2013).

Haji Muhammad Sa'id died on Wednesday after Asar, 19 March 1932 M, when he was 75 years old due to a weak disease on the side of his body and was buried in the Alor Merah Mosque, Alor Setar, Kedah.

3.2.2 Sayyid Shaykh Aḥmad al-Hādī (1867-1934)

Sayyid Shaykh Aḥmad al-Hādī was born on 22 November 1867 M in Kampung Hulu, Melaka. His mother was of Malay descent, while his father, Syed Ahmad ibn Hasan ibn Saqaf al-Hady al-Ba'alawi, was an Arab from Hadrami, Yemen. When he was a child, he was adopted by Raja Ali Kelana, the Sultan of Riau, and was raised alongside the prince in the palace. He studied Theology and Arabic at Madrasah Raja Ali Haji. He was one of the founders of the Rashidiyyah Federation, an active study group in Melaka and Singapore in the 1890s. He also travelled to Arab countries and studied in Makkah, Beirut, and Cairo. At Al-Azhar University, he was influenced by the reformist thinking of Egypt founded by Muhammad Abduh (Fakhrul, 2018).

Returning to Malaya, he was influenced by Sheikh Muhammad Tahir Jalaluddin al-Azhari, who exposed him to the thoughts of Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida. Together with Shaikh Mohamad Tahir, Sheikh Mohamad Salim al-Kalili and Haji Abbas Mohamad Tahar, they started publishing a magazine, namely *Al-Imām* (The leader) on 23 July 1906 in Singapore. On February 4, 1908, he opened Madrasah al-Iqbal al-Islamiyyah in Singapore. Between 1909 and 1915, he became a lawyer in the Syariah court in Johor Bahru. In 1915, he decided to leave the career, allowing him to return to Melaka to open a madrasah with Haji Abu Bakar Ahmad known as Madrasah al-Hādī (Akgun & Zakariya, 2019).

However, the Malays in Malacca did not like the way he taught; he was deemed too radical and controversial. Then, in 1916, Sayyid Shaykh Aḥmad al-Hādī moved to Penang and opened Madrasah al-Mashoor, where one of the teachers at the madrasah was Sheikh Muhammad Tahir Jalaluddin al-Azhari. Madrasah al-Mashhor was also one of the famous religious schools that influenced the radical movement in Malaya during the Colonial era (S. Ramli et al., 2016). This particular school was instrumental in educating young Muslim reformist thinkers and activists at the time.

In 1927, al-Hādī left the teaching profession and opened a printing shop, namely Jelutong Press in Penang, which aimed to serve publications on Islamic reform. He published *Tafsir Al-Qur'ān* by Muhammad Abduh as well as other publications related to articles and open reforms. In 1926, he launched a monthly journal, *Al-Ikhwan* (The Comrade), and in 1928, he published a daily newspaper, *Saudara* (The Brotherhood). Sayyid Shaykh Aḥmad al-Hādī died on February 20, 1934.

Throughout his 86 years of life, he contributed to society in many ways. First, by establishing and operating religious schools, namely Madrasah al-Hādī (1915-1917) and Madrasah al-Mashoor (1916-present). Second, by writing through books, magazines, and newspapers; which emphasised various topics, particularly the religious issues among the Malay community. Besides the magazine *Al-Imam*, the journal *Al-Ikhwan*, and the newspaper *Saudara*, al-Hādī's other works included (1) *Hikayat Setia Asyik kepada Maksyuknya* (published in 1926, reprinted in 1927); (2) *Hikayat Taman Cinta Berahi* (1927-1928); (3) *Hikayat Anak Dara* (1928-1929); and (4) *Hikayat Puteri Nurul'Ain* (1929). All these works were written in the Jawi-Malay script, with only the first novel republished in Romanised Malay.

Al-Hādī also contributed numerous writings on Islamic subjects, such as (1) *Tafsir Juz 'Amma* (Translation of Muhammad 'Abduh's Commentary on the final section of the Qur'ān) (1927); *Tafsir al-Fatihah* (Translation of the Commentary on the First Chapter of the Qur'ān written by Muhammad 'Abduh) (1928); (2) *Agama Islam dan Akal* (1931); (3) *Kitab Alam Perempuan: Bahas dan Huraian Kegunaan dan Kebebasan Perempuan bagi Faedah Dirinya dan Perhimpunan Kaum Bangsa dan Watannya dengan Dalil-dalil Akli dan Nakli Syariah* (1930); (4) *Kitab Agama Islam* (1931); and (5) a booklet called *Kitab Hadiah Kebangsaan* (1933).

3.2.3 Abdullāh 'Abdur-rahmān (1876-1950)

Abdullāh 'Abdur-rahmān was born in 1876 M. He was given the title of al-Johori because he was from Batu Pahat, Johor. He received his early education in Muar and held several positions around the State of Johor. Among them, as a clerk at the Registry of Letters Estate in Muar (1891), Officer of the Fourth-Degree Malay rank Secretary to the Government Commissioner Muar (1910), Secretary of the Department of Religion (1923), Treasurer of the United Muar (1926-1929), Commissioner of Muar (1927), Johor Government Treasurer (1930), and Member of the Cabinet of Ministers (1932). He was also the first Yang Dipertua (1932-1947) of the Johor Religious Department (Abdul Rahman, 2017).

In addition, he was amongst the earliest to establish an Arabic school in Muar in 1901, and was responsible for establishing the first Malay Girls' School in Johor in 1911. According to Abd Latif Jufri and Masnorindah Mohd Masry (2010), the total number of books that Abdullāh 'Abdur-rahmān wrote was 21, including *Matan Risalah al-Tauhidiah*, *Permulaan Adab*, *Pertuturan Melayu (Nahu Melayu)*, *Kitab Permulaan Agama dan Membaiki Perangai*, *Majalah Ahkam Johor*, *Nazam Kalaid al-Jauriah*,

Ilmu Kesehatan, Adab Rumahtangga, Seruan Kepada Jenis Yang Lembut (Perempuan), and others. In 1928, he was awarded Dato' Paduka Mahkota Johor (D.P. M.J.) by Sultan Ibrahim. He died on 15 January 1950. His body was buried at Batu 2 Islamic Cemetery, Jalan Bakri, Muar (Abdul Rahman, 2017).

3.2.4 Aḥmad bin Ya'qūb (1891-1959)

Ḥaji Aḥmad bin Ya'qūb al-Johori, or more affectionately known in Johor as Ḥaji Awang, was born in 1891. His family members called him Tok Aḥmad. Haji Ahmad received his early education in a Malay school at Sungai Durian Kukup, Pontian, Johor. Similarly, he attended religious school like other communities in Johor. Throughout his life, he held an important position as the Inspector of Johor Religious Schools. Before that, Ḥaji Aḥmad served as a religious teacher and served as the Headmaster at Sekolah Tambatan Rendah, Johor Bahru (Ahmad, 2017).

Haji Ahmad is very knowledgeable and had extensive experience with the Johor State education system, so his writings were widely used in the syllabus of the Johor Religious Department. Among them; (1) *Kitāb Ādāb Perempuan – Juzu' Yang Pertama* (1967), (2) *Kitāb Ādāb Perempuan – Juzu' Kedua* (1928), (3) *Kitāb Ādāb Perempuan – Juzu' Yang Ketiga* (1959). (4) *Lidah Melayu* (1954), (5) *Kitāb Isrā' dan Mi'rāj*; and (6) *Panduan Mengajar*. In addition, Ḥaji Aḥmad also translated Arabic manuscripts such as (1) *Cleopatra* (1951); (2) *Ibu Rukambul - Penggal III* (1951); (4) *Ringkasan Tawārikh Keputeraan Nabī Muḥammad S.A.W*, and (4) *Arsène Lupin* (1959).

Furthermore, he was also an expert chef. He was often tasked with preparing food for Royal weddings in Johor from 1956 to 1958 for over 5,000 guests of

honour. Among them include the Royal Wedding Ceremony between the couple, His Highness Tunku Maimunah and His Highness Tunku Othman, ultimately receiving an award from the Royal Wedding Council Committee for his excellent service (Ahmad, 2017).

Due to his interest in the culinary arts, Hāji Aḥmad immortalised the recipes that he had collected, tried, modified, and guaranteed to be delicious in two cookbooks, namely *Medan Selera* (1958) and *Hidangan Terpilih* (1958). Selected recipes from these two books were republished by Ahmad's son with the title *Nostalgia Medan Selera* (2012) with a translation in English, titled *Food Court Odyssey* (2015) adding to the widespread tradition of cuisines available in Malaysia.

For the contribution and services of Hāji Aḥmad to the State of Johor, the Sultan of Johor awarded him Pingat Ibrahim Sultan. To this day, his name remains famous, still revered, despite having passed away at the age of 68 on November 1, 1959 (Ahmad, 2017).

3.2.5 Mohamed Idris Abdul Raof al-Marbawi (1896-1989)

His real name was Mohamed Idris bin Abdul Raof bin Ja'far bin Idris. However, he was better known by the name Mohamed Idris Abdul Raof al-Marbawi al-Azhari, which he used in all his writings. He took on the title al-Marbawi from his family's village, Lubuk Merbau, located in Kuala Kangsar, Perak. Besides, he also described himself as al-Azhari, indicating that he had studied at al-Azhar, the world's most famous

university at the time for studying Islam. In addition, he was also known as Sheikh al-Marbawi (Othman, 2019).

He was born in November 1896 M in Kampung Masfalah, two miles from the city of Mecca, which was also where his family resided at that time. Despite growing up there, he was able to memorise only 16 verses of the Qur'ān, in addition to remembering several religious books at the age of ten (Faisal Ahmad Shah, 2019). In 1913 M, he and his family returned to Malaya where he received his initial education at Sekolah Melayu Lubuk Merbau, Perak.

Subsequently, he pursued his secondary education at various traditional religious schools including Pondok Syeikh Wan Muhammad in Bukit Chandan, Kuala Kangsar, Pondok Tuan Hussain al-Mas'udi in Kedah, Pondok Syeikh Ahmad Fatani in Bukit Mertajam, and Pondok Tok Kenali in Kelantan. After completing his secondary education, he worked as a religious teacher in Perak before continuing his studies further.

In 1924, he continued his education at al-Azhar University in Egypt. He was among the first students to receive Shahadah 'Aliyyah from the university in the field of Islamic studies, demonstrating how seriously and persistently he had pursued knowledge within. He received knowledge from great scholars there, including from Sheikh Muhammad Ibrahim al-Samaluti, Sheikh Mahmud Ghunaym, Syeikh Muhammad Batith, and Syeikh Muhammad Ali al-Maliki, among others.

Throughout his 93 years of life, al-Marbawi produced many writings such as dictionaries, books of *tafsir*, books of Ḥadīth, and books related to the field of *Fiqh* and Sufism. Interestingly, he produced more than 20 writings in which most were published by *Mustafa al-Halabi* Printing, which was one of the largest printing companies in

Egypt. Among the writings that are still referenced by various societies nowadays are *Bahr al-Madhi* and the Arabic-Malay Dictionary known as *Kamus al-Marbawi*. Furthermore, his writings include *Mu'jam al-Ka'inah*, *Kitab Perbendaharaan Ilmu*, *Tafsir Quran al-Marbawi Juzuk Alif Lam Mim*, *Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-Marbawi Surah Yasin*, *Kitab Idangan Guru Sahih al-Bukhari Muslim*, and *Nizam al-Hayah: Peraturan Hidup Umat Islam*, among others.

He passed away in Ipoh Perak General Hospital on 13 October 1989 at the age of 93 years old. His remains were interred in Kampung Lubuk Merbau's Muslim cemetery. Even though he died a long time ago, the Muslim community today, both young and old, still remember him and recognise his contributions. He left behind a daughter, a widow named Munirah Abdul Wahad, three grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren (Abd Razak et al., 2018).

3.3 Malay Writings Concerning Women in the 20th Century

Issues concerning women have long been discussed in many publications, but not many have explored women's issues in Malay writings. Although there are also a limited number of writings in the Malay world that highlight women as the main issue, it is still interesting to analyse how women were portrayed either in a positive or negative way particularly in the Malay community, in addition to analysing the issue from an Islamic perspective.

Interestingly, Muslim Malay scholars were influenced by Muslim reformists from the Middle East, particularly how they advocated for women's right in their writings. For example, Sayyid Shaykh Aḥmad al-Hādī (1867-1934), one of the Muslim Malay scholars who fought for women's emancipation (Nur Saadah, 2020), was also

influenced by a prominent reformist from Egypt, Syeikh Muhammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905). This influence can be seen in his writings, particularly in *Al-Ikhwān*, a magazine that he published and printed between 1926 and 1931 (Noor Zanariah, 2007) with the idea of supporting women’s education and demanding the liberation of women from traditional power structures and empowering women in Malaya. This influence could also be seen through similar approaches applied by Muslim Malay scholars to galvanise social change without abandoning Islamic principles.

Specifically on writing, this study found that there several Malay’s scholars in the 20th century which significantly acknowledged the importance of women in most aspects related to religious teaching, education, social, politics, history, and many others. On the other hand, this study selected writings by five Malay male scholars in the 20th century based on predetermined criteria. Among the selection criteria include early 20th century publication from 1900 to 1960, publication in *Jawi*, and the existence of Quranic verses and hadith addressing women’s obstacles. In summary, the study focuses on the significant writings listed below:

3.3.1 *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*

Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan was first composed in January 1925 M during the administration of Sultan Abdul Hamid Halim Shah Ibn al-Marhum Sultan Ahmad Taj al-Din Mularram Shah (1881-1943), the 25th Sultan of Kedah. The work was written over the course of two years and nine months, and it was successfully finished on Wednesday, 1st October 1927 M (Muhammad Sa’id, 1970). Interestingly, *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* is a comprehensive Qur’ānic exegesis writing of the first 30 verses of the Qur’ān in Malay compiled by a Malay scholar (Ahmad et al., 2018). This is due to the fact that the majority of scholars who discover tafsir are primarily from nearby countries. This

book has actually been reprinted. It has been published numerous times and is still circulated commercially.

The main factor that pushed the writer to write *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* was to honour the needs and desires of the community in Kedah. Hāji Muḥammad Sa'īd claims that the primary intention of authoring the book was to satisfy his friend's requests that he establish the Qur'ānic exegesis in the Malay dialect of Kedah so that they could easily understand the Qur'ān's contents.

"...adapun kemudian daripada itu sungguh telah pintu pada hamba oleh setengah Ikhwan yang mulia-mulia bahwa surat bagi mereka itu dengan Bahasa Melayu Kedah akan suruhan-Nya dan tegah-Nya dengan mudah dan tiada bergoyang-goyang hati pada ta'at dan iman. Maka hamba perkenan akan dia dan jika tiada hamba ahli bagi demikian itu sekalipun kerana menuntut keredaan Tuhan al-Rahman dan menyuka bagi segala hati Ikhwan." (v. 1: p. 2).

Furthermore, the second motivation for him to write was the support he received from a royal of Kedah, particularly Tengku Ibrahim and Tengku Mahmud, the son of Sultan Abdul Hamid Shah ibni al-Marhum Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Mukram Shah (Muhammad Sa'id, 1970).

Intriguingly, *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* did not just contain a translation of the verses of the Qur'ān in Malay, but also interpretations and explanations of those verses. In addition, the content of the book is comprehensive, including a description of the circumstances of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), an explanation of *nāsikh* and *mansūkh*, and a description of the verses (Sholeh et al., 2020). The book is divided into four volumes, each of which is arranged in accordance to a different surah of the Qur'ān, as can be seen from Table 3.1 below:

Table 3.1: The arrangement of surahs in *Tafsir Nur al- Ihsan*

No.	Volume	Surah	Sum of Surah	Sum of Page
1.	I	Al-Fatihah (1) - Al-Maidah (5)	5	254
2.	II	Al-An'am (6) - Al-Isra'(17)	12	353
3.	III	Al-Kahfi (18)- Al-Zumar (39)	22	359
4.	IV	Al-Mu'min (40)- Al-Nas (114)	75	313

Based on Table 3.1, it appears that Hāji Muḥammad Sa'īd did not follow any particular procedure when writing the book because each volume was not organised according to juz or surah number. The sum of surah and pages varied with each volume. The third volume, which has 359 pages and 22 verses, is the thickest, although the fourth volume has 75 verses. The writer included the content in each volume on the last page to make it simpler for readers to refer to certain verses or surahs.

In the first volume, the author began by outlining the circumstances and intentions behind his writing. He then graciously and humbly asked for everyone's help to fix any errors or flaws in his Qur'ānic exegesis. The writer also describes each sūrah's introduction, indicating whether it is a sūrah *makkī* or *madanī*. Each surah number and verse are listed, and a sūrah's specific properties are mentioned along with its reasoning. Unfortunately, the writer did not assign a sentence number to each verse in his writing. This made it a little challenging for the reader to locate or make reference to a sentence for which the reader needs to comprehend its interpretation.

In translating and interpreting verses from the Qur'ān, the author used different font sizes in *Jawi* writing. To make this easier for the reader to determine between the verses of the Qur'ān and the *Jawi* script, each verse has a line and is placed in brackets. According to Mazlan Ibrahim et al. (2014), Hāji Muḥammad Sa'īd's writing style is comparable to *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* in that it places Qur'ānic verses in parentheses before

translating the meaning into Malay and provides a brief explanation and interpretation of the verses.

Moreover, the book is also unique because it uses classical *Jawi* script and the ancient Malay language in the Kedah dialect. For example, there are several terms that the current generation finds a little challenging to understand such as ‘hambat’, ‘tiada sayugia’, ‘menyengehaja’ and others (Abdul Halum et al., 2019). In addition, the author did not entirely implement *Jawi* writing, he also incorporated Arabic terms in his Malay translation. According to Haziyah Hussin and Latifah Abdul Majid (2014), the author proceeded to use Arabic terms without translating them because the terminologies are widely used in the community. For instance, *huquq* which means duty, *burhan* meaning evidence, and *dalalah* that means misdirection. The literary style was often influenced by the Arabic style and structure, which starts with a verb (*jumlah fi’liyyah*), then a subject (*fa’il*), and an object (*maf’ul bih*). It is distinct from the Malay writing style, where words such as *maka*, *hanya*, and *bahawasa* identify the beginning of a phrase. This demonstrates that the writing’s distribution of information follows the tradition of studying a text-reading-oriented religion and still requires a thorough explanation from individuals who are experts in the field.

Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan is still utilised today, particularly in traditional religious school, mosques, and *musollas*. For instance, this writing is applied as a textbook every week at Pondok Tuan Guru Haji Soleh Musa in Sik, Kedah; at Pondok Tuan Guru Haji Bakar Parit Panjang, Baling, Kedah (Sheh Yusuff & Sahad, 2012); at Pondok Berangan and Madrasah Tarbiah al-Atfal, Tumpat, Kelantan; at Madrasah Islamiah al-Jenderami, Selangor; and Masjid Taqwa in Kuala Lumpur (Hussin & Abdul Majib, 2014). Additionally, this book serves as the primary text for the study of Malay Qur’anic

exegesis in the traditional religious school in Pattani, Thailand (Adulhakam Salaebing, 2017).

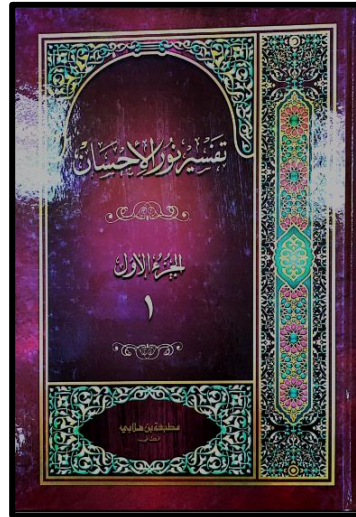


Figure 2: The cover of *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* (Volume I) in Jawi edition, published by *Mabta'ah Ibn Halabi*, Patani.

3.3.2 *Kitab Alam Perempuan*

The book entitled *Kitab Alam Perempuan* is the work of Sayyid Shaykh Ahmad al-Hādī and was republished in 2019 by Akademi Jawi Malaysia in the Jawi script and Malay-Rumi script (Al-Hādī, 2019). The book's first edition was released in 1939 by Jamiliyah Press in Muar, Johor. Additionally, this book is a collection of several articles that were originally published serially in *Al-Ikhwān*, a magazine that used the Malay language printed from 1926 to 1931 (Noor Zanariah, 2007) and published by Jelutong Press, Pulau Pinang. Furthermore, it includes translations of articles written by Qasim Amin.

The main factor that inspired the author to write this book was to encourage the Malay community to rise up and fight for Malaya. Sayyid Shaykh Ahmad al-Hādī urged

the Malays to consider other nations that had achieved independence. Furthermore, the author's desire was to liberate women from the traditions of the Malay society by granting them their due rights such that it inspired him to compose this book.

“...*punca kemajuan tiap-tiap bangsa yang hidup di dalam dunia ini ialah memberi sekalian perempuannya pelajaran bagi menjalankan kewajipan kejadiannya, maka inilah kita jadikan satu kitab yang dinamakan ‘Alam Perempuan’, cabutan daripada majalah al-Ikhwān. ...*” (Kitab Alam Perempuan: page 7 and 8).

The new edition, which was re-published by Akademi Jawi Malaysia, contains 305 pages. The first 134 pages of the book are written in the Rumi script, maintaining the authenticity of the text, while the following pages are from the original manuscript, namely Jawi. In addition, the book's content is separated into 17 chapters, beginning with the introduction and concluding with a glossary. The 17 chapters in this book represent the four primary themes that al-Hādī emphasises throughout his writing; education for women, the rights of needy women, women's hijab-wearing, and women's marriage.

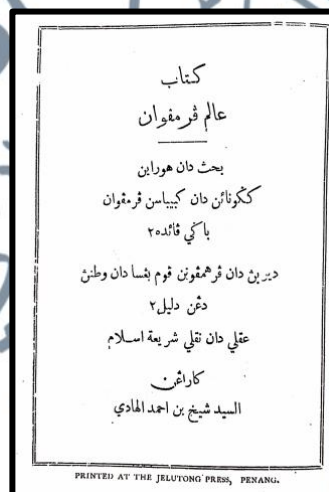


Figure 3: The cover of *Kitab Alam Perempuan*'s Jawi version, which was created by collecting articles that had published serially in *Al-Ikhwān*.

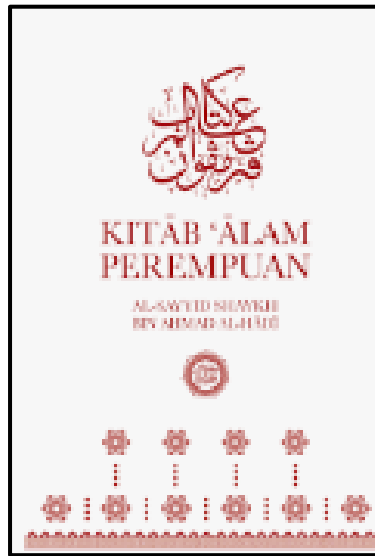


Figure 4: The cover of *Kitab Alam Perempuan* published by Akademi Jawi Malaysia.

3.3.3 *Risalah Seruan Kepada Jenis Yang Lembut Perempuan-Perempuan*

The book entitled *Risalah Seruan Kepada Jenis Yang Lembut Perempuan-Perempuan* is the work of Abdullāh ‘Abdur-rahmān al-Johorī. The first edition of this book was printed and published by Jamiliyah Press, Muar, Johor, in 1939. In the introduction, it is mentioned that the book is a translation of the book authored by Sayyid Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā entitled *Nidā’ ilā Jins al-Laṭīf or Huqūq al-Nisā’ fī al-Islām*, which was written in Arabic and has been translated to other languages. Thus, *Risalah Seruan Kepada Jenis Yang Lembut Perempuan-Perempuan* is the only work by this author that has been translated in the Malay language. Similar to previous books, this book was also republished by Akademi Jawi Malaysia, in 2017 (Abdul Rahman, 2017).

The book contains 329 pages, of which the first 190 use the Rumi script without altering the originality of manuscript, while the remaining pages of the book are attached to the original manuscript, which uses the *Jawi* script. Furthermore, the book is divided into 32 chapters, starting with an introductory chapter written by Abdullah

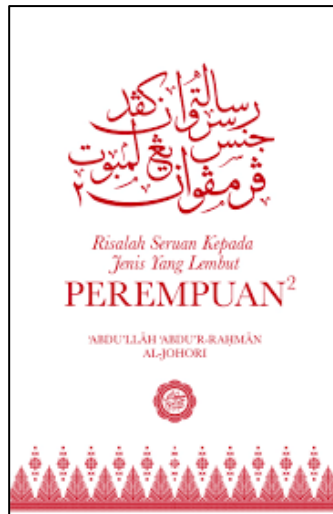


Figure 6: The cover of *Risalah Seruan Kepada Jenis Yang Lembut Perempuan-Perempuan* published by Akademi Jawi Malaysia in 2017.

3.3.4 *Kitab Adab Perempuan*

Kitab Adab Perempuan was written in 1926 in conjunction with the 53rd birthday of Sultan Ibrahim al-Mashhur ibn al-Marhum Sultan Abu Bakar al-Khalil, the second Sultan of Johor. The book was published by Johor Religious Department in 1967, and was printed by al-Ahmadiyyah Press, Singapore.

This book is divided into three parts, but only two parts were recently republished. The first part had been written in 1935 and republished by Akademi Jawi, in 2018. Meanwhile, the second part had been written in 1928 and had not been republished by any publisher. The third part had been written in 1926 and had been republished by Akademi Jawi Malaysia, in 2017. This part was republished first before part one because it was the first part discovered by the publisher (Ahmad, 2017).

The reason for publishing this book is that it was used in female religious schools in Johor during the early 20th century as a text for reading and reference, as

mentioned in the introduction part of the recent version of the book, which was re-published by Akademi Jawi Malaysia in 2017.

Kitab Adab Perempuan volume one, republished by Akademi Jawi Malaysia, contains 223 pages, of which the first 113 pages use the Rumi script without altering the originality of the original manuscript, and the remaining pages of the book are attached to the original manuscript, which uses the *Jawi* script. This volume contains 30 chapters containing advice and words of wisdom based on the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth specifically for girls who are growing up.

In addition, *Kitab Adab Perempuan* volume three has been republished by Akademi Jawi Malaysia and contains 305 pages, of which the first 134 pages use the Rumi script without altering the originality of the manuscript, and the remaining pages of the book are attached to the original manuscript, which uses the *Jawi* script. It contains 31 chapters arranged chronologically from pre-marriage life to life after marriage, and from the world of husband and wife to the realm of parenting. Home management and early childhood education are also carefully written as guidance not only for women but also for men.



Figure 7: The cover of *Kitab Adab Perempuan* published in 1959 (Volume 1)

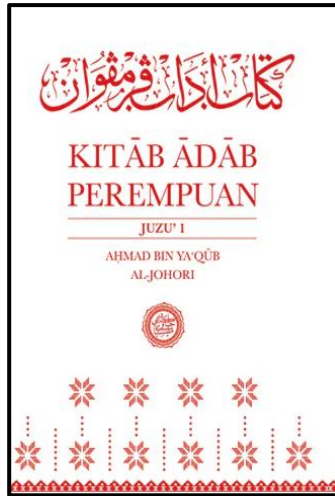


Figure 8: The cover of the *Kitab Adab Perempuan* published by Akademi Jawi Malaysia in 2018 (Volume 1)

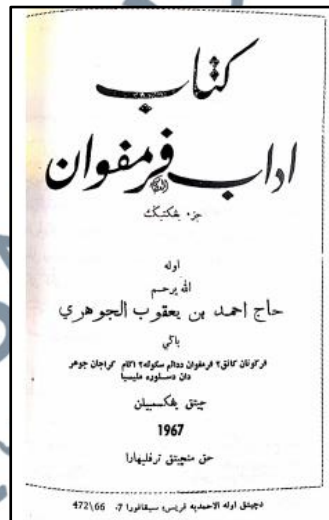


Figure 9: The cover of the *Kitab Adab Perempuan* published in 1967 (Volume III)

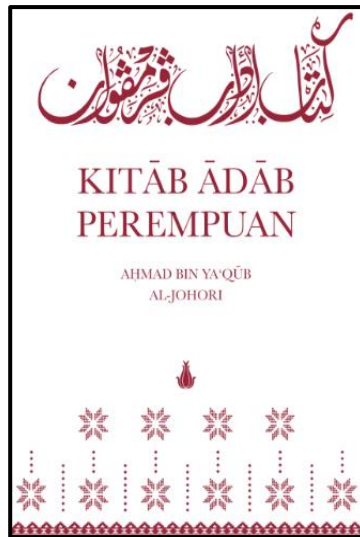


Figure 10: The cover of the *Kitab Adab Perempuan* published by Akademi Jawi Malaysia in 2018 (Volume III)

3.3.5 *Baḥr al-Madhī*

The complete title of this book as stated by the author, Mohamed Idris al-Marbawi, is *Baḥr al-Madhī Sharh Mukhtaṣar Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī* (Volume 1: Page 2). The full title rendered in Malay for the book *Baḥr al-Madhī* is literally a book of descriptions of *Mukhtaṣar Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī*. The title of this book demonstrates al-Marbawi's mastery of Arabic characterised by intelligence and professionalism. The phrase '*Baḥr al-Madhī*' consists of two words: *Baḥr*, which means sea or ocean, and *al-Madhī*, which signifies a kind of white honey (Ibn Manzur, 1999). As a phrase, it could be translated as the 'ocean of nectar', which is a metaphor intended in the book as if it was an ocean of nectar, pleasing and satisfying one's desire and thirst, and at the same time healthy and nutritious for the soul (v.1: p.1).

The factor that motivated the author to produce this book was to realise and apply the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH into practice for non-Arab people, particularly the Malays. The second factor is that the author, who is a scholar, believes

that it is part of his social and religious duty to educate and advocate to other Muslims.

He said:

“...ialah semata-mata ikhlas hatiku bagi wajah Allah kerana mensiarkan hadis Rasulullah dan meninggikan kalimah Allah kepada segala saudaraku yang tiada tahu di dalam bahasa Arab dan dipohonkan pada Allah kiranya manfaat bagi umat Muhammad SAW dan harapkan jadi pertaruhan di sisi Allah bagi hari akhirat. Dan kiranya tiadalah ia hujah ke atasku di dana.” (Volume 1: page 3).

The beauty of this book is that the author uses the combination of the traditional *Jawi* writing style and a mixture of Malay dialects, particularly from Perak, Kedah, and Kelantan. Additionally, the writer keeps a few Arabic words like *mukhtar*, *sina’ah*, *satah*, and *sirr*. This demonstrates al-Marbawi’s dedication to and admiration for the Arabic language while also implicitly persuading the reader to study Arabic vocabulary.

Al-Marbawi was the first to start a thorough translation of *Jami’ Tirmidhi’s* into Malay (Latifah, 2014). The translation was elaborated with detailed commentaries across all the areas on the dogmatic, legal rules, moral teachings, proper manners, history and biography of the Prophet, seditions and crises and virtues as in al-Tirmidhi’s work. The writing presents 2783 Ḥadīths of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH and also covers 8278 topics that address various concerns and problems relating to the Ḥadīth of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. Furthermore, this book comprises 5068 pages and is divided into 22 volumes that are contained in 11 books.

Al-Marbawi does not utilise a particular approach to organise the book’s contents because his writing style is not ordered in accordance with the hadith particular to each volume. There are varied amounts of pages, Ḥadīths, and issues in each volume. Volume number 21 is the thickest because it has 255 pages, despite only having 92

hadiths. Nevertheless, the pages in each volume do not really differ all that much from one another. Al-Marbawi includes a list of issues in each volume to make it simpler for readers to refer to particular Ḥadīths and issues.

In producing the book, al-Marbawi worked 33 years starting in 1924 until 1957M. Al-Marbawi acknowledged that in 1924, he was enthralled by his expert's lectures at al-Azhar University, particularly the hadith lectures presented by Syeikh Muhammad Ibharim al-Samaluti, a recognised hadith scholar who was both a teacher at the Hussain Mosque in Egypt and a Professor at al-Azhar University (Idris Marbawi.' n.d). He started writing the book during this time based on the lectures he had noted and his teacher's explanations.

Regarding the publication date of the book, it is challenging to determine an exact date because each published section is based on the time al-Marbawi finished writing it. For instance, *Baḥr al-Madhī's* five volumes were released in 1935, whereas volume 22, the final volume, was printed in March 1960. The book has since been reprinted numerous times without any amendments or corrections, and the copy utilised in this study was released by Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, albeit without an identified year of publication.



Figure 11: The cover of *Baḥr al-Madhī Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī*

3.4 The Idea of Emancipation of Women in the Malay Writings

Based on the analysis conducted on the selected Malay writings, it was found that the selected Malay male scholars shared significant similarities in how they chose to empower women's rights, whether directly or indirectly. Each may have had a different approach in highlighting women's issues in their writings, but their writings still impacted the social development of Malay women at the time.

Therefore, this study will analyse the ideas of the emancipation of women based on the selected Malay writings based on three important aspects; which are education, work opportunity, and leadership. These three aspects were chosen because most of the Malay scholars in this study emphasised that education is crucial for women. They also agreed that there was no restriction for women to work or improve their own economy. Last but not least, they approved the importance of female leadership. These three aspects are among the important factors for women to achieve emancipation as well as empower them in various aspects.

3.4.1 Education

Education is the process where an individual acquires or imparts basic knowledge to another. It is also where a person develops skills essential to daily living, learns social norms, develops judgment and reasoning and learns how to discern right from wrong. In Islam, seeking education is obligatory, and that knowledge is considered to be the path towards greater closeness to Allah. Interestingly, Islam emphasizes the importance of education without promoting one gender over another.

Therefore, in this study, a broader discussion about women's education is given based on the discussion by selected Malay Male scholars in their writings. These

scholars played a crucial role in appealing for equal education for both male and female children, as knowledge is a tool that empowers one's mind and the community. They called upon Malay parents to give their women more opportunity to obtain education and to enjoin their rights and freedom.

Historically, the early 1900s was marked with women's negative attitude towards education due to their own ignorance of its benefits since they themselves were not given the opportunity to receive proper education. Women were therefore regarded as the cause of Malay educational backwardness since the women themselves opposed the idea of sending their children - both their sons and daughters to school. The women, as indicated, thought that the knowledge learned at Malay schools, traditional religious schools, or madrasahs would not make their children clever nor would it guarantee them a post in the government office or a religious career. For these women, the English school was much worse, as they regarded it as a missionary school, with the main aim of the male Malay scholars believed that early Islamic history had many proofs of Muslim women playing significant roles in society. Among the exceptional women included accomplished businesswomen, scholars, poets, warriors, nurses, and motivators. The scholars contended that the education received by these women made them perceptive, wise, and well-rounded. These characters are useful for women to nurture and bring up their children. The success of women in early times could be linked to their interest in gaining the necessary knowledge that may benefit themselves and the community. They maintained that the participation of women in obtaining education in fact did occur in Islamic history, as the Prophet and his successors always supported women to acquire knowledge. Idris al-Marbawi, in his book *Baḥr al-Madhī*, mentioned that Ummu Salamah was a very clever person. She always asked the Prophet Muhammad about the problems that took place between women in Arabia and the

Prophet would always answer all her questions until she was praised as a clever woman (*Baḥr al-Madhī*: v.22, p.174). It follows that the fulfilment of woman's right to receive education is a necessity in the effort that she better educate her children. A woman thus needs to learn various branches of knowledge at a deeper level so as to fully understand its many benefits. Such understanding would, in turn, facilitate her to instil the love for knowledge in her children.

In a family unit, a woman would become a governess for her children due her more patient, gentler, and softer character. Aḥmad bin Ya'qūb contended that a mother is an influential figure to her children, as she is always socialising and communicating with them (*Kitab Adab Perempuan*: p.37-39). The responsibility of a woman in educating her children highlights the fact that it is incumbent upon her to seek useful knowledge so that she can bring up her children spiritually, intellectually, and physically (*Kitab Alam Perempuan*: p.2-3, 13). The success of a mother in educating and shaping the mind and attitude of her children thus relies on her own level of education. In explicating his view on the matter, Sayyid Shaykh Aḥmad al-Hādī used the analogy of a small kingdom. Within that kingdom, the husband is its speaker-cum-Minister of External Affairs whose duty is to care for all activities outside the house. The wife is the Minister of Home Affairs since she is to administer the internal needs of her household. The alliance of several of such small kingdoms would form a big kingdom with several male and female ministers. The development and well-being of these big states are closely related to the sound administration of each small kingdom, which is mainly controlled by the women (*Kitab Alam Perempuan*: pp.21-22).

Having acknowledged the critical role that a woman plays in the development of a family, it is thus important that she is being provided with a sound and meaningful

education that is pertinent to her role as a wife. The male Malay scholars believe that a husband and a wife are the keys to a family's happiness, and their happiness contributes to the well-being of the community and the nation. The men need the wife to discuss problems with her to seek advice and potential solutions to the problems. However, a man who has an ignorant wife should not discuss his problems with her, as he would not be able to solicit any sound opinions from her on the matter at hand. This could cause a rift between the husband and wife due to the huge gap of knowledge between them (*Kitab Alam Perempuan*: pp.59-62). As a result, an effective communication pattern is not possible in the marriage between an educated husband and an ignorant wife. This gap in knowledge demonstrates the need to pair an educated man with an educated woman, as it is congruent with the teaching of Islam, which encourages man to seek a partner with equivalent intellect and interest. This is to avoid miscommunication between husband and wife, and future conflicts in a marriage.

From the analysis conducted, it is right to mention that parents indeed sent their daughters to schools to gain knowledge. Although girls may obtain knowledge of household management such as food preparation, house cleanliness, and children upbringing at home, they lacked the necessary knowledge relevant for the modern age. This is due to girls' stopping school very early as they were expected to help their mothers to do household work. Having stopped schooling at a very young age, they were never sent to English schools. Within such a limited time, girls were expected to acquire the very basics of reading, writing, and religion. With such limited knowledge, girls at the time would not gain proper understanding of the benefits of education. This situation blocked their opportunity to acquire higher education. In addition, it is recorded that as late as 1922, girls' schools in Malacca relied on male teachers from the boys' schools to take reading, writing, and arithmetic classes in the girls' schools

(Mahani Musa, 2010). This case shows that the number of trained and educated female teachers was very small, as girls' education was seen less important than the boys', and girls were not given an equal opportunity to learn as compared to boys.

Apart from the negative attitude of parents in giving sound education for their daughters, the scant number of female teachers is also attributed to the government policy drafted at that time, especially in the early 1900s, which differentiated between the quality of education for boys and girls. This case could be seen from their enrolment in schools. There was, by 1938, a negligible number of Malay girls attending government and government-aided schools, both in the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States. In the Straits Settlements, only 4.5% of Malay girls were enrolled in these schools. This enrolment percentage was lower than the other developed races in Malaya that included Eurasians (24.8%), Chinese (4.9%), and Indian (6.4%). A similar trend was found in schools in the Federated Malay States: Malays (5.95%), Eurasians (23.48%), Chinese (6.86%), and Indians (6.33%) (Annual Report on Education: 1938). Therefore, it is apparent that very few Malay girls were sufficiently educated, such that it affected their role and responsibility towards the nation and family.

Education would prepare women to benefit their people and nation, and more importantly, it would facilitate them to carry out their role at home as mothers and as the first home educators. The mother's crucial role in educating her children concurs with a view in *Kitab Adab Perempuan*, that the development of men's body and mind, especially when they are children, is associated with women, who are their first teachers (*Kitab Adab Perempuan*: pp.39-40). Having acknowledged the importance of giving education to women, the Malay scholars in the early 20th century called upon thinking

Malays to recognise the need of supporting an attempt to educate girls to become intellectual peers of their future husbands. This is because education for girls will provide light and ventilation essential for development and a vigorous life. This statement shows that the awareness of the scholars to provide more opportunity for girls to learn must be acknowledged, as their opinion about the necessity of providing girls with sound education is linked to what the scholars saw in the Malay community - it lacked educated women.

It is evident that towards the mid-20th century, the Malays still disputed about the necessity of providing religious knowledge to a woman, and as to whether it was permissible in Islam or not. They viewed education as not being obligatory upon women (*Kitab Alam Perempuan*: pp.34-37). Their negative attitude to providing education for girls could also be seen from the Government Annual Report on Education. It was indicated that parents were fearful of their daughters' literacy. They contended that girls must be prohibited from getting an education, as it would ruin their moral principles and conduct. They felt that although girls possessed limited power of reason, they are inclined to try every technique to fulfil their every desire. Education would thus facilitate them to conjure up more tricks, and such trickery and deception had a huge impact on one's ethics. The view that education could ruin one's conduct was rejected by Sayyid Shaykh Ahmad al-Hādī. He maintained that education would definitely instil good values in the children and would also lead them to the true meaning of honour and dignity (*Kitab Alam Perempuan*: pp.87-90).

In a nutshell, the selected scholars were very concerned about women seeking education. With education, women could distinguish themselves from ignorance's inherent characteristics and introduce a variety of positive values to both themselves

and other people. Women could use education as a self-defence mechanism against life's obstacles as they arise over time. Women who are educated are not easily oppressed and discriminated and can emancipate themselves from the numerous forces that restrict women's rights and finally put an end to patriarchal subordination.

3.4.2 Work Opportunity

When women are given an education, they can venture into various fields such as social, economy, and others. Educated women have many opportunities in their lives, namely work opportunity. Women's awareness of getting an education in the 20th century increased, causing their participation in the teaching profession to also increase. Initially, the role of women as educators was not so significant, as these careers were dominated by men. The emergence of the Malay scholars gave awareness to the society about education and changed the society's way of thinking. Parents started sending their girls to schools. Thus, the number of schools, traditional religious schools, and madrasas built also increased. This situation pushed women to help other women impart knowledge in schools.

Aḥmad bin Ya'qūb stated that the nature of women who are gentle, polite, and always understanding are very well suited as educators (*Kitab Adab Perempuan*: p.27). Furthermore, women at the time of the Prophet also dived into the teaching profession as a way to obtain knowledge. When they needed to refer to someone or had problems, they would meet other female *sahabah* to ask and discuss solutions. Idris al-Marbawi described that a female *sahabah* had asked Saidatina Aisyah about how to wash menstrual blood (*Baḥr al-Madhī*: v.22, p.185). This story shows that women have the opportunity to be educators to their children and, in turn, the nation.

Besides that, women are not hindered from the opportunity to get jobs as nurses or doctors. Abdullāh ‘Abdur-rahmān stated,

“Dan lagi perempuan-perempuan itu pergi bersama laki-laki apabila laki-laki pergi berperang mengambil bahagian di dalam pekerjaan hubat-hubat dan melayani orang sakit di dalam peperangan dan lain kerja yang ditentukan baginya.”
(Risalah Seruan Kepada Jenis Yang Lembut Perempuan-Perempuan: p.102).

In addition, the author also said,

“Tidakkah kamu ketahui mengubat orang-orang sakit dan mengubat luka-luka itu pekerjaan yang senang atas perempuan-perempuan pada zaman Nabi s.a.w. dan khulafa, sesungguhnya jadilah pada masa sekarang terhenti atas mempelajari berbagai-bagai ilmu dan perbelaan yang khas.”
(Risalah Seruan Kepada Jenis Yang Lembut Perempuan-Perempuan: pp.84).

Besides that, Sayyid Shaykh Ahmad al-Hādī also mentioned in his book,

“Setengah daripada perempuan-perempuan itu Salmah binti Umar al-Adawiyah, Hind binti ‘Utbah, ‘Umarah binti Ka’ab, Umm Hakim binti Harith, al-Khansa al-Sha’irah, Khadijah binti Khuwaylid, Asma binti Abu Bakar, Aishah binti Abu Bakar, Aisyah binti Talhah, Sakinah binti Husayn, Bakkarah al-Hilaliyyah, Khuwaylah binti al-Azwar, Zarqa binti Adi, Kabshah binti Ma’di Karb, Layli binti Zarif. Umarah binti Durayd, Najiyah binti Damdam, ‘Umrah binti Alqamah dan lain-lainya yang boleh penuh segala muka kitab ini jika kita sebutkan sedikit sahaja daripada perempuan-perempuan masa itu yang menjadi saudagar dan ulama dan hukama, yang memberi petunjuk sekalian laki-laki dan ahli-ahli shair, dan yang menjadi pahlawan hulubalang di dalam mydan peperangan dan menjadi tabib doctor memelihara laki-laki yang luka daripada peperangan di dalam mydan peperangan.....” (Kitab Alam Perempuan: p.31).

From the above statements, the selected Malay scholars emphasised that the women at the time of the Prophet also had opportunities of employment. They became great nurses and doctors at the time, helping Muslim fighters in the war. Although they were not

able to hold weapons themselves, their presence on the battlefield gave the impression that women also played a big role in the battlefield and that they were given the opportunity to be great nurses.

In addition, the situation in Malaya in the 20th century required doctors and nurses. According to records in the State in 1941, government hospitals were in need of the services of Malay women as nurses and midwives. The issue of high maternal and infant mortality around the 1920s received serious attention from various quarters. Therefore, the need for women as nurses grew crucial to help reduce the number of deaths in 1925. Village midwives were recruited among rural women and trained in healthcare, hygiene, nutrition, the weather, and so on. Their opportunity in this field of medicine was also a step that changed the mindset of the society, which at that time was too dependent on traditional medicine alone.

Hence, it is understandable that the scholars did not prevent women from being active in the world of work, especially jobs that require women's skills such as teachers, gynaecologists, obstetricians, and nurses. The presence of women in the world of work in fact helps men as the women fight alongside them for race and religion. Although women work outside, the scholars still advise the women not to neglect their duties as wives and mothers at home. The cooperation between husband and wife is crucial for building a harmonious family (*Risalah Seruan Kepada Jenis Yang Lembut Perempuan-Perempuan: pp.94*).

3.4.3 Leadership

The word leadership is more inclined to men because of their brave and gallant nature, in addition to their strong and thick physique. However, women have also played roles as leaders. In the 20th century, the number of women who rose to become leaders

in society was still small. Women at the time were merely leaders in their home because they lead their children at home. The Malay scholars stated that the Malay society requires a woman who is pure-hearted and responsible for guiding her children to become intelligent and insightful men. This dream can only be realised if the parents, especially the mothers, are wise and knowledgeable. They believe that if mothers are ignorant and uneducated, then the next generation, especially men, will face various problems because women are mothers, educators, and play a major role in the development of men.

However, the lack of women as leaders at the top level is due to three factors (1) Human capital factors, which include issues of educational level, work experience, and career-household conflict. Besides, gender factors raise questions of leadership style and effectiveness, commitment, motivation, self-promotion and negotiation skills. Moreover, there are also factors of prejudice against women from gender stereotypes, biased assessments, and perceptions of women's leadership (Muhamad Rahimi & Hamid, 2017). This issue needs further attention.

Hāji Muḥammad Sa'īd bin Umar explained in his writing, where he interpreted verse 30 in Sūrah Al-Baqarah that Allah made upon the earth a successive authority caliph and placed upon it one who caused corruption therein and sheds blood. He explained that every human being on this earth is a leader and every leader is responsible for what he leads (*Tafsir Nur al-Iḥsan*: v.1: p.14). The Prophet (PBUH) also said,

“All of you are guardians and are responsible for your subjects. The ruler is a guardian of his subjects, the man is a guardian of his family, the woman is a guardian and is responsible for her husband's house and his offspring; and so, all of you are guardians and are responsible for your subjects.” (*Al-Bukhari*: p.283).

Therefore, the duties and obligations of all human beings are the same, which is to be a leader, at least to be a leader for oneself and each leader will be held accountable later.

Apart from that, Hāji Muḥammad Sa'īd bin Umar also wrote about the stories of women who succeeded in becoming great leaders, among them Queen Balqis, Asiyah binti Muzahim, Maryam, and others. Maryam, who was reportedly very beautiful, was also a wise leader. She succeeded in leading her people until they became prosperous men. Hāji Muḥammad Sa'īd bin Umar said,

“Perempuan yang milik jadi raja mereka itu Negeri Saba’ namanya Balqis binti Sarahil, raja besar Yaman diperanak akan bapanya empat puluh keturunan raja-raja Balqis akhirnya sekali ibunya nama Rohaiyah binti Sakin raja Jin dan diberi akan Balqis daripada tiap-tiap satu yang berjahat orang raja dunia daripada alat senjata dan kebesaran dan baginya katil yang besar Panjang lapan puluh hasta lebarnya empat hasta dan tingginya tiga puluh hasta diperbuat daripada emas dan perak...(Tafsir Nur al- Iḥsan: v.3, p.174).

In addition, he writes of the story of Asiyah binti Muzahim, a good woman, who had strong leadership qualities, and held so firmly against the tyrant king, Pharaoh, who was her cruel husband and did not obey Islam. She disagreed when her husband wanted to kill a boy (*Tafsir Nur al-Iḥsan: v.3, p 194*). Furthermore, from the story of Mary, we learn that this great woman was determined to take care of her honour and God gave her the gift of a son, namely Prophet Isa, for her to care for and look after (*Tafsir Nur al-Iḥsan: v.3, pp. 33-37*). These stories are also acknowledged by Idris al-Marbawi in his book *Baḥr al-Madhī* where he states that in Islam, there are important women figures who have performed their roles as leaders (*Baḥr al-Madhī: v.11, pp. 52*).

In conclusion, the Malay scholars believe that the progress of the country does not depend solely on men; women also have an important role to play in leadership.

They provide this evidence in their writings, stating that women in the past were also great leaders. Women are able to be mothers who educate their children to become useful human beings to the nation and the religion. Similarly, women are also capable of being leaders to her people based on the stories in the Quran and Hadith. They can also be a leader to themselves because everything a human being does will be rewarded based on what they strived for.

3.5 Factors of Influencing the Idea of Emancipation

The 20th century was a significant period due to the numerous social, economic, and political changes. The changes that occurred impacted the Malay women in many ways, including providing them with numerous ideologies of women's emancipation that would liberate them. Women's emancipation is a universal effort in which all women in the world oppose stereotypical views, discrimination, and injustice, which go against religious and moral principles.

In the context of Malay women, emancipation is fought for indirectly through a myriad of distinct strategies. Writing is one of the strategies that had a significant impact on enhancing the social harmony between men and women. The Malay scholars' writings are some efforts that introduced the idea of the emancipation of women among the Malay community, either directly or indirectly. Nonetheless, this study also examines another four factors influencing the idea of emancipation as below:

3.5.1 The Education as a Main Focus in Malaya

During British rule, the Malay and Chinese elites made up the majority of women that had primary and higher education, whereas only very few women from the Malays or Indians had gone so far. The British also controlled a large number of educational institutions. Therefore, the Malays were reluctant to send their child to these schools for a variety of reasons, including: they believed that school was used to spread Christianity; and that among the issues that were unfamiliar to Malaysians were gender-free mixing, and parents losing their girls' domestic help (Mahani Musa, 2010; Ozay 2011).

Nevertheless, since the country's independence, the consciousness that women should pursue an education greatly increased, influenced by numerous women's movements from Turkey, Egypt, Indonesia, Britain, and China. The Malays started to think that education was crucial to releasing women from discrimination and misogyny. Kaum Muda, a group of Malay religious scholars, who were largely influenced by Middle Eastern Islamic reformism, was among those who advocated that education be made obligatory for women (Abd. Rahim, 2020). They also contributed to changes in religious education with modern education. (Adibah & Ezad Azraai, 2011).

For example, Sayyid Shaykh Ahmad al-Hādī, one of the influential Kaum Muda leaders, established his own schools, Madrasah al-Hadi in Melaka and Madrasah al-Mashoor in Penang. He also underlined the importance of education in his writings such as *Kitab Alam Perempuan* (1930) and others. In addition, Abdullāh 'Abdur-rahmān founded the first Malay Girls' School in Johor and translated a significant Rashid Rida book into Malay entitled *Risalah Seruan Kepada Jenis Yang Lembut Perempuan-Perempuan*. Moreover, Haji Ahmad bin Ya'qūb's three-volume *Kitab Adab Perempuan*

was purposefully used as a crucial reference for Johor's women religious schools in the early 20th century. There are numerous such instances that highlight education as a crucial requirement for releasing women from prejudice and discrimination.

3.5.2 The Rise of Islamization and Reformation

Malay scholars' participation in the movement for Islamisation and reformation expanded significantly in the 20th century. The process of Islamisation was introduced to help the community embrace Islam in a proper manner compared to conventional ideas that were in opposition to Islamic teachings. According to Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (2002), Islamisation is defined as “the emancipation of a person from different, old traditions that tie humanity, such as magical traditions, mythology, and so on, so that the person will be free and will not depend on the occult, mythology, animism, or superstition, and is free from secular thinking.” It also describes the process of defending or improving the overall concept, function, purpose, and design of man to bring him back to God (Adam & Mohamad Firdaus, 2017).

On the other hand, reform refers to a change or modernised process that improves the social, political, and cultural framework of a society. The increasing reformist movements in the Middle East had an impact on the reformist efforts in Malaya, and curiously, the subject of women garnered significant attention with the idea to liberate women from oppression and injustice. In specific, Islamic reform is a movement that was started to defend women's rights while also making great efforts to uphold the religion alongside efforts to bring about change and reform.

The slogan 'Agama Dididik Moden Dibela', perpetrated by Ibu Zain which asserts that both modernity and religion are significant, is one of the efforts supported

by the Malay women that refutes claims that the movement is influenced by Western culture. The slogan demonstrates the value of religious education in securing women's rights while also emphasising the need for a new strategy in releasing women from the bonds of ignorance (Mahani Musa, 2010; Ruhana, 2017). Furthermore, Islam is a religion that supports the worth and status of women. The Qur'ān emphasises that men and women are equal because they have the same rights, responsibilities, and obligations. All human beings are equal in the sight of God regardless of gender, race, or colour and He has indicated that any disparities are a testament to His might and a way for people to recognise one another (Al-Qur'ān, Al-Hujurāt: 13).

The idea that was supposed to be spread after the rise of Islamisation and reformation was the realisation that two principal Islamic legal texts - the Qur'ān and the Hadith - had previously highlighted the equality of men and women in the society. Islam has never denigrated one or the other or supported a single party, despite the fact that it is unavoidable that men and women each have their unique roles.

3.5.3 The Feminism and Nationalist Ideology

The early 20th century saw the rise of nationalism and the increased demand for the right to independence and freedom from Colonialism. Numerous nationalist leaders, like Burhanuddin al-Helmi, Ahmad Boestaman, and Ibrahim Yaakob, rose forward to encourage the nation to struggle for independence. Women also actively joined in social activities and nationalist movements in the early 1990s. All parties became more aware of the need to struggle for independence and elevate the position of oppressed women during the colonial era as a result of the hardship faced under the Colonialists. In order to attain women's freedom in the country, Jayawardena (1986) argued that nationalism and feminism, closely related, are needed, especially in colonised nations.

Malaysia is not an exception to the rule when it comes to feminism's early emergence. Many women started the fight for independence with a nationalist spirit, but at the same time, feminism also affected them to fight for freedom, justice, and equality. The same movement also occurred in numerous nations including Egypt (Jazzar, 2011), Turkey (Oz Cetin, 2009), and Indonesia (Qibtiyah, 2009), using the merging of nationalism and feminism as a point of departure to differentiate non-Western Feminism from their Western counterparts (Jacoby, 1999).

3.5.4 The Emergence of the Women's Movement

The emergence of numerous movements and organisations supported by women is regarded as a crucial factor that impacted Malaya's social and cultural change. Even though it was discovered that women's movements did not start around the 1920s and 1930s as in Indonesia, the women's movement groups at the time solely focused on educational issues (Hasan, 2017). Additionally, increasing girls started to enrol in school. The movements and organisations for women that were established also had philanthropic and social goals in addition to education.

Women activists put in a lot of effort to advance education and call for Malay women to participate in the economy and social development (Hasnah, 2011). The movement contends that women must have the chance to advance their rights not only in education but also in employment and participation in community activities (Arba'iyah, 2020). They also encouraged mothers to teach their kids the proper approach so that their minds mature and have a better perspective of life. In addition, women should continuously think critically and have an independent soul and mind. This strategy is required so that women can teach their kids how to communicate confidently, honestly, truthfully, and with ambition as well as contribute to the nation.

3.6 The Impact of Idea of Emancipation among the Malay Women

The Malay scholars' efforts to advocate and support the emancipation of women succeeded in empowering women in various aspects. In the Malay context, these writings contributed to the advancement of Malay women and have simultaneously positively impacted three important sectors: education, economics, and politics.

3.6.1 The Impact of Emancipation of Women on the Educational Sector

The idea of emancipation brought by Muslim Malay scholars helped spread awareness to the community on how important it is that Malay women pursue education. They played a significant part in advocating for equal education for both male and female students. Besides that, they emphasised that education is a tool that may empower women's intellect and affect one's community. They encouraged Malay parents to provide more opportunities for women to pursue education, fight for their rights, and be liberated from oppression. They also believed that Malays would develop successfully only if its women were equipped with the necessary knowledge and proper education. It is apparent that the Malay scholars' concept of education was not confined to men only; they also suggested women be armed with sound and proper education so they could carry out their duties successfully.

For example, the critical duty of a woman as a mother and home educator, requires her to be equipped with the most fundamental knowledge, which is domestic science, including solid management of the household and finances. A woman needs to be more creative in solving problems in order to estimate her household's financial budget and manage monthly spending. The scholars believed that educated women could manage their household affairs well. Consequently, they really went all out to raise education awareness among the Malay people, particularly among its women

(Muhammad Ridzuan & Arba'iyah, 2014). The crucial role that a mother plays in educating her children concurs with a view stated in *Kitab Adab Perempuan*—that the development of men's body and mind, especially when they are a child, are associated with women, who are their first teachers (*Kitab Adab Perempuan*: page 39-40).

Women need education not only to manage home economics, but mostly because education will help them become well-behaved and will empower them in contributing to the nation and the country. Ahmad bin Ya'qub described that as for the consequences of girls not being educated in school, when they grow up, they will be unfortunate human beings, and might not have a chance to contribute to society (*Kitab Adab Perempuan*: page 52). Other scholars, such as Abdullāh 'Abdur-rahmān stated that the obligation to provide education to girls is the same as that of providing education to boys. Consequently, girls also should be exposed to many forms of education (*Risalah Seruan Kepada Jenis Yang Lembut Perempuan-Perempuan*: page 24).

In addition, the idea of emancipation brought by Muslim Malay scholars caused numerous schools specifically for women to be established. For instance, Abdullāh 'Abdur-rahmān established a religious school in Muar in 1902, and also founded the first Malay Girls' School in Johor in 1911. Sayyid Shaykh Ahmad al-Hādī also built school for women, namely Madrasah al-Hadi in Melaka, in 1917, and Madrasah al-Mashoor al-Islamiya in Penang in 1919. Interestingly, in 1928, ten government schools for females were established in Johor (Mahani Musa, 2010). In proper schools, they learned English, Mathematics, Geography, and many others. Furthermore, girls were also taught household skills in school such as how to care for small children. They were also given cooking classes, sewing classes, and many more. Intriguingly, the book *Kitab*

Adab Perempuan written by Ahmad bin Ya'qub was used as the text for reading and referencing in female religious schools in Johor, as mentioned in the introduction part of the recent version of the book that was re-published by Akademi Jawi Malaysia in 2017.

In their writings, the Malay scholars also acknowledged the significant roles that Muslim women play in society, especially in early Islamic history. They maintained that the participation of women in obtaining education, in fact, was a strong part of Islamic history, as the Prophet and his successors always supported women to acquire knowledge. For example, Idris al-Marbawi, in his book *Bahr al-Madhi*, mentioned that Umm Salamah was an intelligent woman who always asked the Prophet about the problems that took place between women in Arabia, and the Prophet would always answer all her questions until she was praised as a clever woman (*Bahr al-Madhi*: v. 22, p. 174). So, it follows that the fulfilment of woman's rights to receive education is a necessity to empower themselves in various sectors, as well as to help women better educate their children and civilisation as a whole.

3.6.2 The Impact of Emancipation of Women on the Political Sector

The writings of Muslim Malays scholars also impacted the political sector, with more women in Malaya becoming involved in the country's political movements as a result. The Malay scholars believed that the progress of the country does not depend solely on men; women also have an important role to play in leadership and politics. Although there are some arguments on the issues of female leadership in Islam, a success story of a woman ruler, known as the Queen of Sheba, has been described in the Qur'an as 'a women ruling over them, and she has been given abundance and she has a mighty throne' (The Qur'an, An-Naml: 23).

This story was acknowledged by Idris al-Marbawi in his book *Baḥr al-Madhī* and Ḥāji Muḥammad Sa'īd bin Umar in *Tafsir Nur al-Iḥsan*, who stated that in Islam, there are important women figures who have performed their roles as a leader. In fact, they also emphasised that leadership is not solely the responsibility of men - every human being on the earth is a leader and every leader is responsible for what he and she leads (*Tafsir Nur al-Iḥsan*: v. 1: p. 14).

The permission given in Islam, as well as examples from Islamic history on successful women leaders, are among the factors that Malay women became involved in politics and went on to become leaders in society. Among the Malay women who were actively involved in politics were Khatijah Sidek, Aishah Ghani, Shamsiah Fakeh, and many others. These women figures are proof of the importance of women's emancipation and nationalism in fighting for Malaysia's independence (M.Hasan, 2020). Their involvement in politics was also due to many other reasons, such as to improve the status of women in society, to establish religious classes, to increase unity and patriotism, and to oppose the proposed establishment of the Malayan Union (Hamidi & Mustafa, 2013).

3.6.3 The Impact of Emancipation of Women on the Economic Sector

From the selected writings, it was found that the Malay scholars had also encouraged women to participate in the economic sector. In Islam, the economy is also as important as other aspects in order for a person to survive and it is an area that develops the prosperity of the society. Although it is common that most of the economic resources in the family fall under the responsibility of men as the leader of the family, this does not mean that women have no right to be involved in the economic sector as well. Hence, some of the Malay scholars have highlighted the need for women to

participate in the economy within the limits of their skills and ability, for Islamic history has recorded many Muslim women in the past who are also known to be great businesswomen.

Sayyid Shaykh Aḥmad al-Hādī in *Kitab Alam Perempuan* recognised Khadijah bint Khuwailid as a successful businesswoman and used her example to clarify that women are also entitled to carry out roles other than domestic ones. Besides, Abdullah ‘Abdul Rahman, in his book *Risalah Seruan Kepada Jenis Yang Lembut Perempuan-Perempuan*, emphasised that all women have the right to own money and property, as Islam has prescribed dowry (*mahr*), inheritance, and financial transactions for women as in the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth. Therefore, women are allowed to generate income by participating in economic activities and business transactions.

He said,

“Dan diberi dan diluluskan pada perempuan itu haqq berjual beli sewa menyewa; dan beri memberi dan bersedeqah dan lain-lainnya.” (Risalah Seruan Kepada Jenis Yang Lembut Perempuan-Perempuan: page 56).

In the Malay context, many women have actively been involved in small businesses and crafts to earn a living alongside their husbands since the olden days. For example, women from Kelantan and Terengganu are until now actively engaged in the state economy— selling crop products, weaving, making marine products, and others (Seri et al., 2020).

Although the Muslim Malay scholars in this study agree that women are allowed to go out to search for sustenance by helping the husband with the household economy, the women are also encouraged to keep to the Islamic social boundaries when dealing with males at the workplace. They were also advised to learn how to balance their

responsibilities inside and outside the home. The wife's cooperation in generating the household income could help the husband to improve and raise their overall standard of living, especially with the increased fees caused by children's schooling, home debts, cars, and other expenses that need to be paid that demand the wife to go out to work to help ease the burden of the husband.

3.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, through the selected writings of the Malay Male scholars above, the emancipation of women can be categorised into three specific definitions. First, the emancipation of women is a process of women being emancipated based on Islamic teachings from all forms of prejudice, traditions, and powers that have assigned them to a certain sector that is mainly related the 'personal sphere'. Second, the emancipation of women refers to the release of women from different restrictions on their rights as well as the elimination of patriarchal subordination, as defined by Islam. Third, the emancipation of women is to provide women the opportunity to exercise their rights in a just manner so that they can carry out their obligations and contribute their skills and abilities in the context of *fardhu kifayah* as the caliph of God, as prescribed by Islamic religious law.

The five Male Malay scholars selected in this study managed to bring awareness to the Malay society about the emancipation of women. Each may have had a different approach in highlighting women's issues in their writings whether directly or indirectly, but their writings still impacted the social development of Malay women as well as their involvement in the educational, political, and economic sectors. An in-depth discussion of their writings is covered next in Chapter Four.