

Da'wah Communication in Classical Malay Literature: Analyzing Islamic Values in Raja Ali Haji's Syair Abdul Muluk

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dan merumuskan model komunikasi dakwah kultural Raja Ali Haji yang dibangun melalui integrasi nilai-nilai Islam dan tradisi sastra Melayu klasik dalam naskah Syair Abdul Muluk (1824 bait naskah). Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif yang didukung oleh pendekatan sejarah, hermeneutika sastra, serta sosiologi kebudayaan, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi kandungan teologis yang sengaja disisipkan di dalam struktur naratif fiksi kepahlawanan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Syair Abdul Muluk mengintegrasikan 12 pilar nilai Islam yang mencakup dimensi teologis (akidah/tawakal), syariat (ibadah), dan akhlak (etika kepemimpinan adil serta emansipasi gender syar'i). Model komunikasi dakwah dalam teks ini mengejawantahkan sebuah strategi dakwah kultural yang sistematis, di mana estetika sastra berfungsi sebagai saluran pelunak doktrin keagamaan agar adaptif bagi khalayak Melayu tradisional. Kajian ini juga menemukan fungsi purifikasi teks yang mengoreksi praktik sinkretisme lokal, seperti pergeseran fungsi ritus sesajen dalam tradisi lisan pertunjukan Dulmuluk, ke arah doa selamat syar'i. Implikasi penelitian ini menegaskan kontribusi penting sastra klasik abad ke-19 sebagai basis metodologis dakwah kontemporer yang persuasif, inklusif, dan mengedepankan keluhuran moral.

Kata Kunci: Sastra Melayu Klasik; Syair Abdul Muluk; Komunikasi Dakwah; Raja Ali Haji.

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze and formulate Raja Ali Haji's cultural da'wah communication model developed through the integration of Islamic values and classical Malay literary

traditions in the Syair Abdul Muluk manuscript (1,824 stanzas). Utilizing a descriptive qualitative method supported by historical, literary hermeneutics, and cultural sociology approaches, this research explores the theological content deliberately embedded within the narrative structure of heroic fiction. The results indicate that Syair Abdul Muluk integrates 12 pillars of Islamic values encompassing theological (creed/tawakkal), sharia (worship), and moral dimensions (just leadership ethics and sharia-compliant gender emancipation). The da'wah communication model in this text exemplifies a systematic cultural da'wah strategy, where literary aesthetics serve as a channel to soften religious doctrines, making them adaptive for a traditional Malay audience. This study also uncovers a text-purification function that corrects local syncretic practices, such as shifting the function of traditional offering rituals (sesajen) in the oral tradition of Dulmuluk performances toward sharia-compliant prayers for safety (doa selamat). The implications of this study reaffirm the vital contribution of 19th-century classical literature as a methodological foundation for contemporary da'wah that is persuasive, inclusive, and prioritizes moral excellence.

Keywords: *Classical Malay Literature; Da'wah Communication; Syair Abdul Muluk; Raja Ali Haji.*

INTRODUCTION

Classical Malay literature, in essence, has never stood in a vacuum sterile from the upheavals of spiritual values (Kurniawan, 2025). Since the massive wave of Islamization swept through the Nusantara region, Malay language and literature have undergone a fundamental functional shift (Mahfud et al., 2021). Literature no longer merely serves as an instrument of court entertainment or the documentation of royal genealogies; rather, it has shifted roles to become a theological, epistemological, and intellectual anchor in the dissemination of Islamic teachings (Fouz Mohamed Zacky & Moniruzzaman, 2024). This process gave birth to what cultural historians term the Islamization of the Malay mind, wherein the concepts of metaphysics, tawhid (monotheism), jurisprudence (fiqh), and Islamic ethics were internalized into the structure of local linguistic expressions (Abdullah et al., 2024).

One critical cultural artifact representing the harmonious convergence between traditional literary aesthetics and Islamic theological doctrine is the Syair Abdul Muluk manuscript (Rosmalina et al., 2024). Based on literary history records, this manuscript was initially written in the mid-19th century in Riau by Salehah, and was later refined, disseminated, and popularized by a prominent scholar and literary figure from the Riau-Lingga Sultanate, Raja Ali Haji (Halkis & Sudardi, 2022). The text, consisting of 1,824 stanzas of narrative poetry, underwent a very rich dynamic of cultural transmission (Gayen, 2025). In the Palembang region of South Sumatra, this written text transformed from a court manuscript tradition into a living oral tradition among the grassroots through the performing art of folk theater known as Dulmuluk (Salsabila et al., 2025).

However, contemporary sociological realities present a concerning portrait of cultural alienation or a decadent cultural transition. Since the late 1990s into the current modern era, the existence of Dulmuluk theater as a medium for conveying moral-religious messages has experienced a sharp decline (Notosutanto Arhon Dhony et al., 2025). This traditional art form has been eroded by the swift currents of globalization, digital penetration, and the dominance of the capitalistic modern entertainment industry, such as single-organ music performances that lack educational value. Consequentially, classical literature and folk theater have drastically lost their appeal among the younger generation of Malays (Sugita et al., 2021). The implication of this generational disconnect manifests in symptoms of moral decadence, cultural identity crises, and a cross-generational miscommunication of spiritual values (Roy, 2024).

Although Syair Abdul Muluk and the Dulmuluk tradition have been studied several times by previous researchers, a distinct academic research gap remains (Notosutanto Arhon Dhony et al., 2025). Previous research by Dalyono and Saleh (1996) was strictly confined to the institutional history and performance management of the Dulmuluk theater in Palembang, leaving the core text unexamined. Meanwhile, Zahra Alwi focused exclusively on conventional Arab-Persian aesthetic structures and natural settings without linking them to active religious propagation. In addition, Rudianto (2018) evaluated the moral virtues (*budi pekerti*) within the poem, yet his analysis lacked an Islamic theological framework, rendering the values secularized and detached from the *tawhid* mission. This study explicitly establishes its novelty by integrating classical literary hermeneutics with *da'wah* communication science. It distinguishes between Syair Abdul Muluk as a written textual medium, the Dulmuluk performance as an oral-transformative tradition, and Raja Ali Haji as the strategic intellectual *da'i*. The specific model produced from this study is an Inculturated Textual *Da'wah* Model, which demonstrates how rigid theological doctrines are softened through literary aesthetics to systematically transform local political and gender structures without causing cultural friction. To date, no comprehensive study has dissected Syair Abdul Muluk through the lens of cultural *da'wah* communication (Wicaksono et al., 2025).

This study addresses that academic void, the primary focus of this research is not merely to describe the physical beauty of the manuscript or the execution of the theater performance, but to dismantle the original manuscript of Syair Abdul Muluk as a planned and systematic cultural *da'wah* communication system conceived by Raja Ali Haji. Through the functional integration of Islamic doctrinal values and local aesthetics, this poem successfully mediates divine messages without causing cultural shocks to its reading audience (Visram, 2025). Therefore, this study aims to deeply analyze the Islamic

values within Syair Abdul Muluk and to formulate a cultural da'wah communication model relevant to the contemporary context of national character building (Nasihin et al., 2024).

Conceptually, da'wah communication can be defined as an interactive process of conveying Islamic messages derived from the Qur'an and As-Sunnah by a communicator (*da'i*) to a recipient (*mad'u*) utilizing specific channels or media to achieve changes in behavior, attitudes, and spiritual as well as physical orientations in accordance with Allah's sharia (Tanjung & Abdullah, 2025). In the mapping of da'wah across Nusantara, particularly in the Malay World, the cultural da'wah approach stands as the primary methodological pillar and has proven historically effective (Dwijayanto & Choirin, 2025). Cultural da'wah rejects penetrative models that are confrontational and destructive toward local traditions (Alhafizh et al., 2024).

Conversely, cultural da'wah demands a subtle penetration of Islamic values (inculturation) into the pores of indigenous culture (Setiawan, 2025). Through this strategy, Islamic values do not destroy the conventional aesthetic wrapper of local traditions; rather, they enrich and direct their meaning toward harmony with tawhid. In the realm of literature, this encounter gives birth to literary texts that meet a dual criterion: possessing a pragmatic utility or beneficial value for enhancing faith (utilitarian function) while maintaining a high aesthetic value (aesthetic function) (Rychnová et al., 2022). Literature thus transforms into a fluid, imaginative, yet doctrinally truthful pulpit for da'wah.

In dissecting literary texts with religious nuances, the use of a literary hermeneutics approach becomes a methodological necessity. Hermeneutics, as the art and theory of text interpretation, assumes that a classical literary work should not be viewed as a linear collection of dead words (Vorova, 2026). Religious literary texts inherently share characteristics with sacred texts regarding the need for interpreting multi-layered inner meanings (Ungar-Sargon, 2025). Written language in the poem is utilized by the creator (Raja Ali Haji) as a symbol of communication linkage to express abstract metaphysical ideas into concrete forms of allegory or metaphor.

Hermeneutics operates by deconstructing and reconstructing these linguistic symbols (Huda et al., 2025). Romantic relationships, inter-kingdom warfare, a wife's loyalty, and political conflicts presented outwardly in the fictional narrative of Syair Abdul Muluk are disassembled to uncover the substantive underlying Islamic messages. Through this method of inner interpretation, researchers can trace the hidden ideological

and spiritual agenda of the author in his efforts to purify Islamic teachings amidst the social reality of the Malay community of his time (Supena, 2024).

It is crucial for a scientific study to clearly establish its position within the body of knowledge built by previous researchers. Based on literature tracking, several significant scholarly works have examined Dulmuluk theater and Syair Abdul Muluk, yet they possess orientations vastly different from this study. A classical study conducted by Dalyono and Saleh (1996), published by the Department of Education and Culture, pioneered the documentation of the physical aspects of Dulmuluk theater in Palembang. Their main findings successfully mapped the foundational lineage of Dulmuluk troupes from stage to stage and their performance procedures. However, that study was purely descriptive-historically and sociologically stage-oriented, neglecting the content of the original manuscript text (Pransiska & Hasan, 2023).

Furthermore, the textual analysis conducted by Zahra Alwi in her master's thesis examined the alignment of the manuscript's textual structure with traditional Malay literary conventions influenced by Arab-Persian aesthetics. Although profound in terms of philology and literary stylistics, that study positioned Islamic values merely as an external aesthetic complement rather than the core message of da'wah communication. Lastly, a journal article by Rudianto (2018) examined moral values (*budi pekerti*) in the manuscript and linked them to social character building, concluding that a communicative and friendly disposition dominates the narrative. The limitation of Rudianto's study lies in the absence of an Islamic theological analytical tool, leaving the discovered moral values appearing secular and detached from the mission of tawhid da'wah. Thus, the novelty of this research lies in the integration of da'wah communication science and classical literary hermeneutics to formulate a cultural da'wah model (Owie, 2023).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted using a qualitative research design incorporating a manuscript text case study method and pure library research. Given that the object of research is a past literary work that remains alive in public culture today, the researcher integrates three approaches simultaneously: a historical approach (to trace the genealogy of the text and its 19th-century writing context), a sociological approach (to observe the transmission of the text into Palembang's Dulmuluk theater), and a literary hermeneutics approach (to dissect the inner meaning of the da'wah messages) (Arhon Dhony et al., 2025).

This study utilizes a qualitative-hermeneutic approach focusing on the stanzas (verses) of Syair Abdul Muluk as the primary unit of analysis. The content classification procedure for the 12 pillars of Islamic values was conducted through close reading and semantic mapping, where each stanza was examined for keywords related to Islamic ethics (*akhlak*), legal principles (sharia), and monotheistic concepts (tawhid). The distribution percentages of 35%, 25%, and 40% were calculated based on the quantitative frequency of stanzas directly containing these thematic dimensions divided by the total 1,824 stanzas of the text. Regarding data verification, this study did not perform external criticism on physical 19th-century paper manuscripts; rather, it conducted internal criticism on the semantic consistency of the early printed text edited by Roorda van Eijsingga (1847) and the Balai Pustaka edition. To validate the transformation of the text into the Dulmuluk oral performance, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three key informants: two traditional Palembang theater practitioners and one cultural historian from Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah. Informants were selected via purposive sampling, and interview data function as a contextual-sociological validation tool to confirm how the written values of the text are dramatized in performance.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Mapping of Text Structure and Classification of 12 Islamic Values

Based on the results of close reading and deep hermeneutic analysis of the entire 1,824 stanzas of the Syair Abdul Muluk manuscript, the researcher found empirical evidence that this text was consciously designed as a vessel for Islamic religious doctrine. The structure of Islamic values embedded in the poem is not sporadic but forms a complete ecosystem of values. The researcher classified the distribution of dominant Islamic value contents into three major categories: Theological/Creed, Sharia/Worship, and Morals/Political Ethics (Ruhullah & Ushama, 2025).

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- | | | |
|---|------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Theological Category (Creed & Tawakkal): | [████████████████████] | 35% (638) Stanza |
| 2. Sharia Category (Worship & Law) : | [████████████████] | 25% (456) Stanza |
| 3. Moral Category (Ethics & Leadership) : | [████████████████████] | 40% (730) Stanza |
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Chart 1. Percentage Distribution of Islamic Value Categories in the Text

The percentage distribution of these stanzas reveals that the pillar of Morals and Leadership Ethics occupies the largest portion (40%), followed by the Theological pillar (35%), and the Sharia pillar (25%). To provide a structured analytical framework, the

distribution and hermeneutic meanings of the core Islamic values within the 1,824 stanzas of Syair Abdul Muluk are systematically summarized in Table 1.

Table 1.
Hermeneutic Classification of Islamic Values in Syair Abdul Muluk

Value Category	Stanza Sample (Original Malay)	Indonesian/English Translation	Hermeneutic Interpretation & Da'wah Communication Strategy
Theology / Creed (35%)	Bismillah itu permulaan kata / Dengan nama Tuhan alam semesta / Memuji Allah azza wa jalla / Tuhan yang bersifat malikul jala	Bismillah is the beginning of words / In the name of the Lord of the universe / Praising Allah azza wa jalla / The Lord who possesses majestic sovereignty	Purification of Creed: The use of <i>kalimah tayyibah</i> at the exordium functions as a counter-hegemony against local syncretic animations, redirecting traditional performance safety protocols from ancestral jinn invocation to tawhid-centered consciousness.
Sharia Category (25%)	Anakku sedang remaja putera Pasti-pasti sebarang bicara / Pekerjaan jahat janganlah segera Kepada Allah minta pelihara	My child, as a young person, be mindful of your words and actions. Do not carelessly speak about or involve yourself in wrongful deeds. May Allah always watch over and protect you.	This loving guidance protects youth from careless actions by using a heart-centered da'wah strategy that fosters spiritual accountability and divine protection.
Morals & Leadership Ethics (40%)	Janganlah engkau berbuat zalim / Supaya berkah negeri yang alim	Do not commit tyranny / So that blessing abounds upon a pious land	Mirrors for Princes: Acts as a socio-political communication tool aimed at the ruling elite, establishing that political legitimacy in the Malay state is inextricably bound to divine accountability and justice for the vulnerable (<i>dhuafa</i>).

Based on table 1 the text explains that the use of *kalimah tayyibah (bismillah)* at the beginning of the stanza functions as a counter-hegemony against local syncretic animism by redirecting traditional safety protocols from ancestral jinn invocation to a tawhid-centered consciousness; this loving sharia-based guidance protects the youth from careless actions through a heart-centered da'wah strategy that fosters spiritual accountability and divine protection; and the morals and leadership category acts as a socio-political communication tool (Mirrors for Princes) aimed at the ruling elite to

emphasize the importance of avoiding tyranny so that blessing abounds upon a pious land.

In further detail, this Islamic value ecosystem manifests into 12 ethical-religious pillars as follows:

1. **Religious & Theological Value:** The principle of absolute tawhid is placed as the foundational starting point of the entire narrative. This is explicitly evidenced by the opening stanza of the poem: "Bismillah itu permulaan kata / Dengan nama Tuhan alam semesta / Memuji Allah azza wa jalla / Tuhan yang bersifat malikul jala" (Bismillah is the beginning of words / In the name of the Lord of the universe / Praising Allah azza wa jalla / The Lord who possesses majestic sovereignty). The use of this kalimah *tayyibah* is not merely a literary formality, but a form of theological da'wah communication to instill god-consciousness before humans begin their socio-cultural activities (Chaer et al., 2024).
2. **Honesty Value:** Moral integrity is a highly emphasized da'wah message. In the narrative, the character Bahauddin from Hindustan is depicted as experiencing a political downfall and imprisonment due to lying, manipulating information, and deceiving the Sultan. This characterization serves as an educational instrument for readers that deceitful behavior, according to sharia, brings worldly disgrace in the form of social humiliation.
3. **Tolerance and Wisdom Value:** The concept of peace in plurality is strongly reflected in the character of Sultan Abdul Hamid Syah. When interacting with foreign merchants of different tribal, ethnic, and religious backgrounds at the Barbari port, the Sultan demonstrates legal justice without discrimination. This da'wah message affirms the Constitution of Medina, wherein justice must be universally upheld for all elements of society.
4. **Discipline Value:** Submission to the customary law order (*adat*) based on sharia is demonstrated through the compliance of soldiers and palace officials with the decrees of a just king. Discipline in this poem is interpreted as an extension of the concept of obedience to the authorities (*ulil amri*) as long as their policies do not involve sin.
5. **Hard Work and Gratitude Value:** Persistence in facing life's trials is inherent to the protagonist characters. When the kingdom is attacked and Abdul Muluk is captured, Siti Rafiah does not choose to surrender to fate. She exerts maximum effort (*ikhtiar*) by traversing dense wilderness, training herself, and formulating military strategies—a representation of Allah's word that He will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves.

6. **Independence Value:** Non-dependence on creation is depicted through Siti Rafiah's refusal to seek help from allied kingdoms before proving her own independent strength and strategy. This value educates the mad'u to possess the mentality of *'iffah* (maintaining self-dignity) and to avoid easily begging for assistance.
7. **National Spirit Value:** Love for the homeland (*hubbul wathan*) manifests in the heroic defense of the sovereignty of the Barbari Kingdom against foreign military aggression. Raja Ali Haji utilized this narrative to ignite patriotism among Malay society in facing the penetration of Western colonialism during the 19th century.
8. **Appreciating Achievement Value:** Royal honors are justly awarded to every individual who makes a tangible contribution to national security, regardless of their original social status. This reflects the principle of meritocracy within the Islamic public administration system.
9. **Friendly/Communicative Value:** The socio-cultural openness of classical Malay society is encapsulated in the stanza: "*Sangatlah mengasihi dagang dan santeri / Adilnya limpah seisi negeri*" (Deeply loving traders and religious students / His justice overflows across the entire land). This line indicates that Islamic preaching in the Malay World flourished due to the inclusive, warm, and communicative nature of local inhabitants toward travelers and religious knowledge seekers (santeri).
10. **Peace-Loving Value:** Although warfare is present in the plot, war is positioned only as a last resort (*ultimum remedium*) to halt tyranny. The primary orientation of every conflict resolution in the poem is the restoration of security, peace, and the welfare of the broader public.
11. **Responsibility and Justice Value:** The foundation of Islamic political leadership manifests in state testaments. Leaders are fully accountable before the people and before the divine court in the afterlife.
12. **Tawakkal Value:** Total submission to Allah's will after exerting maximum sharia-compliant effort is staunchly personified by Siti Rafiah when she is lost in the middle of the vast wilderness following the fall of the kingdom. The poetic stanza records: "*Sangat tawakal hatinya puteri / Kepada Allah menyerahkan diri / Siang dan malam menangis menjerit / Meminta tolong kepada Rabbul 'Alamin*" (Deeply reliant was the princess's heart / Unto Allah she surrendered herself / Day and night weeping and crying out / Seeking help from the Lord of the Worlds). The hermeneutics of this stanza assert that tawakkal is a Muslim's ultimate spiritual weapon when facing existential crises.

Analysis of Raja Ali Haji's Da'wah Communication Strategy

In the perspective of communication science, Raja Ali Haji acted as an accomplished communicator or intellectual da'i who applied a contemporary da'wah model of his time, namely the *Da'wah bil-Kalam wat-Tadwin* model (preaching through structured oral and literary text). He deeply understood the audience psychology or the sociology of the 19th-century Malay *mad'u*, which was emotional-aesthetic in character. Malay society in that era was an oral-literate community that would strongly reject rigid, dogmatic religious doctrines presented in a purely jurisprudential (*fiqh*) manner without emotional resonance. Therefore, Raja Ali Haji chose the romantic-historical narrative poem (*syair*) genre as his channel or medium of da'wah communication. Through arrays of beautiful rhymes, he slipped in values of tawhid and morals without the readers realizing it, allowing the da'wah message to be absorbed persuasively.

Sharia Da'wah versus Cultural Syncretism (Purification of Creed)

One of the most crucial findings and the primary novelty of this study is the presence of cultural tension deliberately introduced into the poetic text to rectify deviations in creed (purification). In the sociological context of Palembang, along with the transformation of Syair Abdul Muluk into the performing art of Dulmuluk theater, syncretic local mystical practices emerged. Before a theater performance commenced, there was a traditional offering ritual (*sesajen*) led by a stage shaman (*pawang*). The offerings consisted of *bubur sunan* (traditional porridge), roasted chicken, bitter coffee, and seven-color flowers presented to the guardian jinn of the land or ancestral spirits to ensure a smooth performance and protect the actors from supernatural disturbances.

Through the original manuscript of this poem, Raja Ali Haji executed a counter-hegemony against this mysticism. The da'wah communication message within the text explicitly directs the audience to completely eradicate shirk (polytheistic) traditions. The text guides readers to redirect those offering rituals toward performing the five daily prayers in congregation, reciting safety prayers derived from the Prophet, and fulfilling the obligation of direct charity (*sedekah*) or sacrifice (*qurban*) solely to seek the pleasure of Allah SWT. The researcher correlates this textual analysis with the word of Allah in QS. Al-An'am: 136, which strictly forbids partitioning harvest or food for idols/*jinn*. Hermeneutically, the stanzas of Syair Abdul Muluk educate society that absolute safety and protection lie solely under Allah's power ("*Takuti olehmu Allah alma'bud*" – Fear Allah, the One to be worshipped), such that tethering stage safety to offerings constitutes an invalidation of tawhid.

Leadership Da'wah and Islamic Socio-Politics (Mirrors for Princes)

Raja Ali Haji did not only preach to the grassroots but also targeted the ruling class of the sultanate. Syair Abdul Muluk is positioned as a classical Islamic political guidebook (mirrors for princes). When Sultan Abdul Hamid Syah is depicted nearing his death, he summons the crown prince and delivers a state testament through the stanza: "*Jikalau ayahanda sudah mati / Tinggallah tuan menjadi ganti / Hendaklah siasat jangan berhenti / Rakyat tentara jangan disakiti / Adil dan murah janganlah segan / Kepada fakir miskin berilah makan / Janganlah engkau berbuat zalim / Supaya berkah negeri yang alim*" (If your father has died / You shall remain to take his place / Let governance never cease / Do not harm the people and the army / Do not hesitate to be just and generous / Feed the poor and needy / Do not commit tyranny / So that blessing abounds upon a pious land). This represents a form of vertical-educational da'wah communication. Rulers are strictly reminded that power is a theological mandate for which accountability will be demanded in the afterlife. Leaders must act justly, protect the vulnerable (*dhu'afa*), and cherish seekers of religious knowledge.

Emancipation and Deconstruction of Gender in Islamic Perspective

Another intellectual insight of Raja Ali Haji's da'wah communication is the deconstruction of female gender roles through the characterization of Siti Rafiah. In pre-Islamic old Malay literary conventions, women were frequently depicted as passive, weak domestic beings who were merely objects of suffering within the palace. However, in this poem, Raja Ali Haji makes a revolutionary leap of thought in accordance with Islamic values of emancipation. Siti Rafiah transforms into a representation of the ideal Muslimah who is independent, tactically intelligent, and possesses proficient military capabilities.

She courageously disguises herself as a man named Dur Jauhari, traverses the dense wilderness, seizes the throne of an allied kingdom, leads a thousand combat troops, and ultimately succeeds in liberating her husband (Sultan Abdul Muluk) who was held captive in a Hindustan prison. Despite holding immense military and political power during her disguise, Siti Rafiah is depicted as strictly maintaining her purity, sharia boundaries, and her honor as a wife. The text records: "*belum pernah digauli oleh Dur Jauhari... karena niat di dalam hati / menjaga janji yang suci*" (never was she intimately approached by Dur Jauhari... because of the intention within her heart / to uphold the sacred promise). Through this narrative metaphor, Raja Ali Haji sends a powerful gender da'wah message to Malay women: Islam does not forbid women from advancing in the

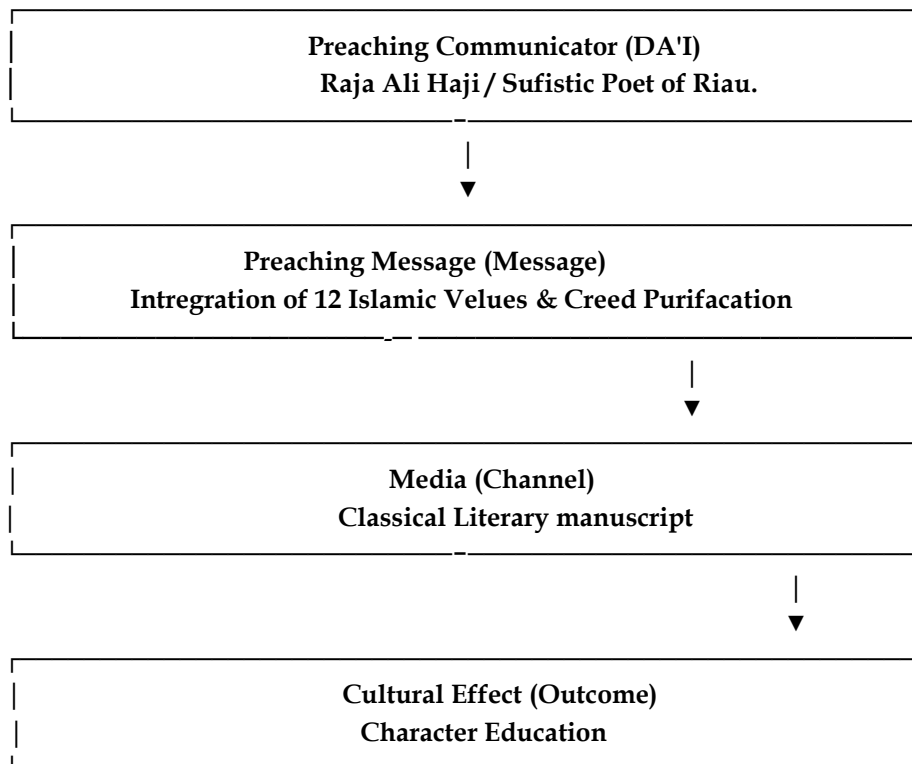
public sphere, attaining high education, or leading strategies, provided that the foundations of faith and personal honor remain staunchly guarded.

Cultural Da'wah Communication Integration Model

Based on the entire analytical exposition above, the researcher formulates a theoretical model termed the Raja Ali Haji Cultural Da'wah Communication Integration Model. This model demonstrates how a fictional literary text can act as a macro-medium of da'wah connecting a sacred communicator with the plural cultural reality of the *mad'u* (Al-Ma'ruf et al., 2024). This communication flows in a linear-circular manner, where the resulting cultural effects do not merely stop at the readers of the text but transmit into the Dulmuluk folk performing arts in Palembang. To facilitate understanding of this da'wah communication structure, the researcher presents the framework flowchart in the schema below:

Figure 1.

Schematic of Raja Ali Haji's Cultural Da'wah Communication Integration Model



The schematic diagram above theoretically proves that Islamic preaching in Nusantara does not always have to appear rigid, doctrinaire, or utilize confrontational formal pulpits against old traditions. Classical literature in this model functions as a cultural bridge that softens the complexity of theological doctrine into daily aesthetic consumption for society. Literature does not lose its entertainment value, yet at the same time, it shoulders the sacred burden as an agent of national character education based on Islamic pillars (Ar et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

Based on the extensive theoretical, historical, and hermeneutic analyses presented, this study concludes that Syair Abdul Muluk by Raja Ali Haji is not merely an ordinary work of romantic-heroic fictional literature, but a cultural da'wah communication instrument designed in a highly systematic, mature manner with wide-reaching impact in the Malay World. In conclusion, Syair Abdul Muluk by Raja Ali Haji serves as a highly structured instrument of cultural da'wah communication that effectively embeds 12 pillars of Islamic values into classical Malay poetic rhymes. This study highlights three major scholarly contributions: first, it advances da'wah communication science by formulating an inculturation model through fictional media; second, it enriches classical Malay literary history by bridging textual philology with performative arts; and third, it provides a practical methodology for cultural da'wah to clean local syncretic rituals (*sesajen*) into monotheistic orthopraxy (*doa selamat*). However, this study is limited by its exclusive reliance on historical textual hermeneutics, leaving contemporary reader reception and audience responses unexamined. Therefore, future research should pursue empirical reception studies on modern Dulmuluk theater audiences, comparative structural analyses with other 19th-century Riau-Lingga poems, or performative ethnographies of active folk theater troupes.

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