Film as a Medium of Communication for Daᶜwah: Analysis of Religious Elements in Selected Malay Films

Filem sebagai Saluran Komunikasi Daᶜwah: Analisis Unsur Keagamaan dalam Filem Melayu yang Dipilih

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ABSTRACT

The use of film for conveying the message of daᶜwah is seen as a new approach that has to be taken as an opportunity. This research uses a qualitative content analysis in dealing with religious elements in Malay feature films within the genre of (religious) drama. FINAS (2010) recorded that 26 films had been produced throughout the year 2009. Out of the 26 films, two were selected for the research by purposive sampling – categorized as films with religious elements – namely Syurga Cinta (2009) and Muallaf (2009) – Paradise of Love (2009) and Muslim Convert (2009). The research uses two important principles in film analysis, which are the story and plot, and the characters and character traits. The main objective of the research is to identify religious elements adopted in Malay films belonging to the religious genre in line with the concept of Islamic da'wah or the opposite.

Keywords: Qualitative content analysis, Malay films, religious elements, Islamic da'wah

ABSTRAK

Penggunaan filem untuk tujuan menyampaikan mesej dakwah dilihat sebagai pendekatan baharu yang perlu diambil peluang. Kajian ini menggunakan analisis isi kandungan kualitatif dalam membincangkan unsur keagamaan dalam filem cereka bergenre drama (keagamaan). FINAS (2010) mencatatkan sebanyak 26 buah filem telah dihasilkan sepanjang tahun 2009. Daripada 26 buah filem tersebut, dua buah filem telah dipilih secara persampelan bertujuan yang mencapai kategori filem yang mengandungi unsur keagamaan iaitu Syurga Cinta (2009) dan juga Muallaf (2009). Kajian menggunakan dua prinsip penting dalam penganalisaan filem iaitu cerita dan plot serta watak dan perwatakan. Objektif utama kajian ialah untuk mengenal pasti unsur keagamaan yang diangkat di dalam filem Melayu bergenre keagamaan selari dengan konsep Dakwah Islamiah yang sebenar atau sebaliknya.

Kata Kunci: Analisis kandungan kualitatif, filem Melayu, unsur keagamaan, dakwah Islamiah

INTRODUCTION

Research in the field of media and communication from the perspective of Islam and *daᶜwah* has been explored by a number of Muslim scholars (Mohd Yusof 1985: 1-14; Zulkiple 2003: 1-23; Zulkiple 2009: 53-62; Olayiwola 1993: 91-104; Hamid Mowlana 1989 (in Khiabany 2003: 415-422). Shahril Anuar (2006: 127) has clearly explained that the concept of *daᶜwah* has to be streamlined with a mass media approach in ensuring that the effort of *daᶜwah* will become a more effective process. Postmodern *daᶜwah* preachers have to take every available opportunity to bring forward the light of Islam to the public. The field of *daᶜwah* and that of communication basically share the same process in the sense that they both require receivers as targets. What differentiates between them is that *daᶜwah* is made for the purpose of *amar maᶜruf* and *nahi munkar* – enjoining right conduct and forbidding indecency. It is a concept to differentiate the approach of *daᶜwah* from the process of communication. Through the model of communication introduced by Laswell (1948: 37-51), it can be clearly utilized as the process of the *daᶜwah* approach through the medium of film as proposed by the research. The Laswell Model (1948: 37-51) portrays the importance of every element such as the family factor and level of education as the factor that determines the effects from the occuring communication process.

In attempts to diversify the medium of *daʿwah*, film is seen as a medium which has a compelling power. The success of films as a new means of entertainment showed that it can influence the lifestyle of people. Regarding creative works in the form of films with elements of *daʿwah*, it is not that we want films and dramas that merely highlight religious matters but we want those that stand on the axis of Malayness and religious values (Zunainah 2008). A drama or film claimed to be *daʿwah*-propagating must have values of *maʿruf* (right conduct) that are (70-90 per cent) more than the elements of *munkar* (indecency) portrayed. Dramas that depict otherwise (characters being bad, bad, and bad, before repenting in the end) are not *daʿwah* dramas but they are just dramas that manipulate Islam to gain profits (Ummu Hani 2009). Therefore, the Muslim filmmakers for example should allow a space to incorporate the concept of *amar maʿruf nahi munkar* in their films as an excellent mediator to deliver propagation of beliefs.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Genres that directly display Islamic approaches in Malay films are still lacking in Malaysia. There are only a few films that can be categorized as belonging to the religious genre (drama) such as Semerah Padi (1956) and Syukur 21 (2000). The statistics issued by FINAS (2010) recorded that 26 films had been produced throughout the year 2009. Nevertheless, there were only two films within the genre of drama that included religious elements directly. The question is whether or not Malay films nowadays are seen as the medium of communication for *daʿwah* in conveying Islamic messages to the audience.

Adam (2008) said:

Cuma dalam sibuk kita hasilkan filem lebih fiksyen, lebih romantis atau lebih 'drift,' satu hal penggiat filem kita 'terlepas pandang' ialah betapa kita gersang dengan filem menjunjung kesucian Islam.

(While we are just busy producing films that have more fiction, more romanticism, or more drift, one thing that our filmmakers overlook is how we are barren of films that uphold the purity of Islam).

Understanding Islam and assimilating *daʿwah* elements are not just by showing scenes of *salah*, nemesis-like suffering and torture, divine retribution through poetic justice, or even lots of didactic dialogues and mere humanitarian values. Many films produced reflect the directors' standpoints by bringing forward messages which are good, didactic, and *daʿwah*-wise messages. However, these films also confuse the audience with scenes that tarnish the image of Islam such as those showing adultery or fornication, free mingling of the sexes, and extreme exposure of the *aurah* (certain parts of the body that must be covered). Therefore, this research raises questions concerning the development of the story and plot, and the showing of the characters and character traits in selected films as to whether or not they bring up moral and religious values in line with the requirements of the Islamic *daʿwah*.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research generally observes the role of the medium of film as the medium of communication for *daʿwah*. The objective of the research is to identify the principle of the story and plot that brings up moral and Islamic values in selected Malay films. Also, the research aims to identify the principle of the characters and character traits that bring up these values. These films will be evaluated as to whether or not they are in line with the true Islamic *daʿwah*.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Twenty six films were produced throughout the year 2009 (FINAS 2010). They contributed to a variety of genres and themes. The focus of this research is meant for observing the production of Malay films within the genre of drama that directly includes religious elements in films.

LITERATURE REVIEW

FILM AND *DAʿWAH* COMMUNICATION

The Communication Model introduced by Harold Laswell (1948) emphasizes the aspects of the impact and effects on society resulting from the use of mass media as compared to other communication models (Figure 1 and Figure 2) (Cugelman et al. 2009: 4-5; Flensburg 2009: 40).

Film as one of the forms of mass media is also seen as something that has impact on the audience. The conveying of the communication message in every film production also helps film producers bring forward certain messages intended to be delivered to the film audience. Therefore, film is not only elevated as an aspect of art but most important, it is
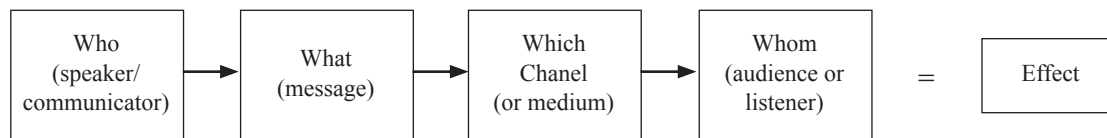
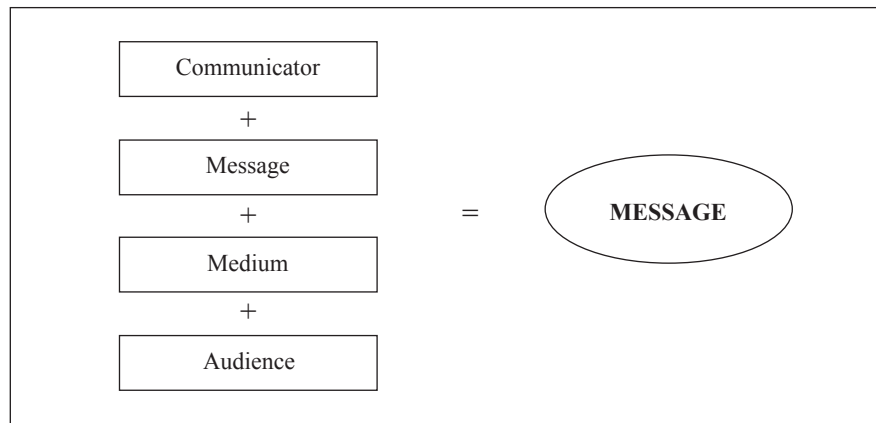FIGURE 1. Harold Laswell Communication Model (1948)

FIGURE 2: Laswell Model (1948): **Who** (Sender) Says **What** (Message) in **Which** (Medium)
Channel to **Whom** (Receiver) with **What** (Feedback) Effect?

also the medium of conveying effective messages that can be propagated among the society. This was put forward by A. Razak (2004: 65), stating that film should not be seen from the perspective of art only. Film is a medium of communication for educating the society by conveying a certain message to the public. Moreover, Jowett and Linton (1985: 16) confirmed that the study of film is not just a study of art but the perspective of film also acts as a mass communication, playing a role as a mass-mediated culture in society.

The approach of *da°wah* today has to be suitable for current challenges and situations (Ab. Aziz 2005: 107-114; Norkumala 2009: 1). According to Sohirin (2008: 215-218), using the field of media and communication as one of the strategies of the *da°wah* approach is necessary nowadays in order to approach a variety of people to whom *da°wah* is made. This is because the job of doing *da°wah* itself contains the aspects of communication in conveying the *da°wah* message. What differentiates the *da°wah* propagation from communication is only the aspect of the message as well as how the *da°wah* medium is used for achieving the objective of *da°wah*. Thus, in the development of the Information Technology today, the duties of doing *da°wah* should be able to compete in using the latest communication system to bring the *da°wah* message to the public.

Nevertheless, the society's understanding about Islamic films and films with Islamic elements has to be thoroughly clarified. This is because there arises some confusion in defining these two types of films. There are parties that equate Islamic films and films with Islamic elements. Naim (2010: 15-16), in his paper entitled "Filem Islam" ("*Islamic Film*"), however, differentiates between Islamic films and films with Islamic elements. According to Naim (2010: 15), a film with Islamic elements refers to one in which there are depictions containing some elements that are in line with Islamic requirements but then the film is not entirely Islamic. This is probably due to the aspects of narrative, dramatics, cinematography, semiotics and application in addition to the technical and contextual aspects.

As for Islamic films according to Naim (2010: 20), they carry the messages of self-submission, submissiveness, obedience and conviction of the *tauhid* of Allah, the Supreme Creator. Furthermore, Naim (2010: 20) stated that:

> *Hasil garapan inti-inti pembicaraan tentang seni dalam Islam, maka filem Islam diungkapkan sebagai sebuah hasil seni, berbentuk 'produk halal,' pra dan pasca penerbitan dengan pengisian dan garapan bersandarkan kod etika dan nilai Islam sehinggalah kepada proses edaran, tayangan dan tontonan khalayak. Tujuannya menyebar dakwah, menerap nilai murni dan menegakkan amar makruf nahi mungkar.*

As a result of composing the ingredients of the discussion about art in Islam, an Islamic film is thus expressed as a work of art, in the form of a

'*halal* product', in the pre and post production of the film with the content fulfilment and composition based on the code of ethics and Islamic values up to the process of distribution, film showing and audience viewing. The purpose is to propagate *da*c*wah*, assimilate noble values and uphold the *amar ma*c*ruf* and *nahi munkar*.

According to Naim (2010: 18), the film industry is a suitable channel to be used for upholding the *amar ma*c*ruf* and *nahi munkar* – enjoining right conduct and forbidding indecency. An Islamic film has to have these noble characteristics and objectives. Islamic films have to be full of messages with the elements of advice, guidance and reminders. All these elements have to be harmoniously composed, full of artistic values and beauty, becoming the attractions and having an impact on what is being conveyed. Islamic films must have the courage to speak the truth and play the role of upholding the *amar ma*c*ruf* and *nahi munkar*, unlike films that lead to indecency and are trapped in the Western philosophy, thought, and values which are contrary to Islamic values. This was clearly explained by Abu Hassan (2006: 16) who stated that film itself from a certain point of view is a process in which the truths in Islam are developed and spoken, with all the cinematic structure – from the narrative to the cinematography, from the dialogue to the gesture, from the actors to the character traits, from the idea to the script – and are supposed to be composed and postioned in the *tauhid* (the One-ness of Allah) as they (the truths) are in the *aqidah* (firmness of faith in Islam), *akhlaq* (high morals), *ibadah* (worshipping Allah), courtesy, and Islamic *shariah*.

FILM FROM THE RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVE

Some religions such as Christianity for example, touch on religious issues rather extensively through films such as The Ten Commandments (1956, 2006). Bollywood films also often associate religion with the life of Hindu society. This can be seen through acts in the films that directly show scenes in Hindu temples and scenes of worshipping rituals in both classic and modern films such as Mother India (1957) and Kuch Kuch Hota Hai (1998). In fact, Islam also made use of the medium of film to uplift the history and message of Islam through films such as The Message (Muhammad, messenger of God) (1976).

The journal Religion and Film debates a great deal issues that touch on aspects of film and theology (Christianity). The course "Religion, Film and Matties Popular Culture" (1998: 1) discussed how film reflects and forms thought. It also debated about religious ideas that could be translated through the medium of film. As for Flesher & Torry (1998: 1-2), they clearly stated that film shapes religious ideas more than how religion uses film to convey the religion's faith and practice to society. Cardullo (2002: 1-6), while translating Andre Bazin's works, explicitly elevated the position of the cinema and theology (religion) that had been championed by Andre Bazin (2002: 1-6). Andre Bazin (2002: 1-6) also viewed film from a religious perspective and understood film as an obligation to God. Hence, to show sincerity in glorifying God, the Lord of the entire universe, is by manifesting the truthful reality through the religious theme.

Film is not only made as a mere entertainment but also has moral elements and good messages inserted into it at irregular intervals (Suhaina 2006: 37). Furthermore, Siti Rugayah (2006: 5) stated that the art of acting is one of the ways of telling a story that translates reality. The Quran also uses the way of telling stories to make *da*c*wah*. In fact, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) used drama to invite his people to accept Allah as their God. This story is told in the Quran in *surah* al-An^cam: 74-81. Yet acting has become one of the aspects of art whose *hukm* (ruling of *shariah*) is doubted as well. There has been much debate over the *hukm* of watching films in terms of Islam (al-Qaradawi 2007: 499). The hanky-panky in the acting field associated with negative cultures has confused the society a great deal with regards to the *hukm* and justifiability from the Islamic perspective.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Film samples were used for collecting data from documents in audio and visual forms. The data were analysed with the coding and categorization through the qualitative content analysis. The selection of the method of the qualitative content analysis gave the advantage of scrutinizing the media content based on the context and process (Wesley 2009: 1-27; Hsieh & Shannon 2005: 1277-1288; Kracauer 1952: 631-642). To understand the role of film as the medium of *da*c*wah* communication, two films with religious elements which were produced in 2009 were chosen as the units of analysis. These films directly display religious elements. The films are Syurga Cinta (2009) and Muallaf (2009) – *Paradise of Love (2009)* and *Muslim Convert (2009)*.

This research used two types of main sources of data which were primary data and secondary data. Primary data were collected through the screening of the selected films in the form of DVDs distributed in the market. These films were watched repeatedly to identify the religious elements shown in order to achieve the objective of the research based on the category and unit of analysis. As for the secondary data, they were collected from literature research to enhance the perspective and accuracy of the analysis in order to deal with the questions of the research.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the unit of analysis through the coding and categorization done, two main categories and sub-categories were formed. This analysis used two main principles which were the story and plot, and the characters and character traits. As for the method of determining the theme, the use of acts and dialogues that could be associated with the basic theme will be discussed.

ANALYSIS OF THE FILM "SYURGA CINTA"

Syurga Cinta (2009) was directed by Ahmad Idham. This film is categorized as belonging to the genre of comedy drama (romantic comedy) that carries a love theme. However, the love theme composed by Ahmad Idham brings up religious elements that can be clearly seen in this film. Syurga Cinta made a box-office profit of RM2.3 million (FINAS 2010) and had an unprecedented difference in the country's film industry when it directly brought forward Islamic values. Yet this film is too far behind to be categorized as a *da'wah* film as it does not fulfil the concept of *da'wah*. As such, the statement made by Abd Aziz (2009: 23) quoted David Teo as saying that the film producer of *Syurga Cinta* who categorized it as the second MIG (Metrowealth Movies Production Sdn. Bhd.) *da'wah* film after Syukur 21 did not meet the characteristics of a real *da'wah* film. An Islamic film or *da'wah* film according to Naim (2010: 18) must contain elements of *da'wah* and thus uphold the *amar ma'ruf* and *nahi munkar*.

The story starts with Irham's return from the UK. Irham is a young man who leads a prodigal and flirtatious life and is proud of Western life and culture. His long past life in the UK has caused him to be unhappy returning to Malaysia for good. The first plot point is created by bringing forward Irham's character that is fond of betting with his two close friends, Alex and Zainal. Irham accepted their challenge to court a woman named Syuhadah who wears a *tudung* (kind of veil worn my Muslim women). Syuhadah is a modern young lady but she remains religious and observes her *akhlaq*. Irham's *mission* to court Syuhadah is assisted by his foster brother Ikmal who is *Cikgu* (Teacher) at Syuhadah's kindergarten. The second plot point is depicted when Irham embarrasses and insults Syuhadah in front of Alex and Zainal, which causes much regret in Irham's heart. Eventually Irham realizes that he really loves Syuhadah.

Nevertheless, the subject of Syurga Cinta is not an original one. This film is seen as trying to bring forward the same subject as the one shown in Kiamat Sudah Dekat (2003). Syurga Cinta is like Kiamat Sudah Dekat that uses a child named Ikmal to carry out the courting mission. Also, both films used religious elements. As for the narrative, it is straightforward and does not clarify the gravity of the conflict. There does not exist the intensity of the strong impact in terms of emotional intensity and the film subject does not give an emotional touch that moves the audience's feelings.

Syurga Cinta has characters such as Irham, Syuhadah, Ikmal, Atuk (Syuhadah's grandfather) and Irham's parents apart from Alex and Zainal who are Irham's close friends. Love is always the theme portrayed in Malay films but then the love theme in Syurga Cinta is composed based on the religious conflict between the two main characters namely Irham and Syuhadah. Besides, characters in Syurga Cinta move around in the world atmosphere superficially. There is nothing much composed to define established characters.

The protagonist character Irham is portrayed as someone who is Western-educated and looks up to the lifestyle and culture of the West. Meanwhile the character Syuhadah is depicted as a modern young woman who observes the limits and boundaries of social mingling besides covering her *aurah* and practising the Islamic way of life. The meeting of these two characters manifested the conflict as their ways of life differ but eventually come to the point of commonness when Irham is trying to change and understand Islam without him himself realizing it. Heliza's first acting is very stiff whereas the portrayal of the character Irham is not that convincing and is inconsistent as regards his character as an individual who received Western education. Nevertheless, the character Syuhadah's

portrayal as a Muslim young lady can be observed through the way she dresses that covers her *aurah* and the way she shows courtesy.

Syurga Cinta shows a lot of dialogue that invites people towards good and noble values as well as closeness to Islam such as:

SYUHADAH
Observing *salah* (Islamic prayer) without fail cannot prove whether we have *iman* (Islamic faith) or not. *Salah* is obligatory for every Muslim. That's why solah is the pillar of *Deen* (Islamic Religion). It's like building a house – we set up the pillars first before setting up other parts of the house.

IRHAM
Sometimes I feel shy with Ikmal, even though he's only 8 years old but he knows about religous matters more than I do!

SYUHADAH
Marriage is an *ibadah* (form of worshipping Allah) which is not obligatory but is destined by Allah. As His servant, I have to make an effort and then leave everything to Him so that I will find a life mate whom Allah loves, *insha Allah* (if Allah wills so.)

There exists a character's atmospheric space in which the character always carries out religious duties as a Muslim as shown in the acts of performing the *salah*, reciting the Quran, giving good advice and mutually respecting one another. These acts show that Muslims must carry out their obligatory duties that Allah has ordained. Religious elements (the portrayal of Islam as the way of life) in Syurga Cinta can be observed by looking at three aspects namely *aqidah*, *ibadah* and *akhlaq*. The aspect of *aqidah* touched on by this film is something that encompasses the Muslim belief in the pillars of *Iman* (fundamentals of Islamic Faith) such as belief in the Almightyness of Allah. The importance of this *tauhidic* concept (the concept of the Oneness of Allah) becomes the message conveyed to the audience with regard to belief in Allah *Subhanahu wa Ta'ala* (Most Noble, Most Exalted). Questions of *ibadah* aspects are also untangled in this film. Syurga Cinta attaches very great importance to the aspects of *ibadah* such as *salah* and reciting the Quran as obligatory duties upon each and every Muslim. As for the aspect of *akhlaq* in Islam, this film also untangles questions of the etiquette of mingling of the sexes who are not bound by marital ties besides highlighting such good values as showing respect for the elderly.

Notwithstanding, there occurs a disequilibrium in the portrayal of Islam in this 120 minute-long film. The depiction of Islam is also mixed with elements of indecency and debauchery leading to major sins by showing such acts as drinking liquor, fornication and exposure of the *aurah*. These acts are seen as tarnishing the entire Islamic message that is being conveyed as they do not fulfil the criteria and concept of *daᶜwah* in terms of *amar ma'ruf* and *nahi munkar*.

ANALYSIS OF THE FILM "MUALLAF"

Muallaf (2009) is unlike other Yasmin Ahmad's films. This film clearly brings up issues of humanity and theology. Indeed, Yasmin Ahmad is a great director especially when it comes to aspects of creativity and her meticulousness in the production of a film. This can be observed through the production of Muallaf that is rich in very beautiful film shots and techniques. Anyhow, the discussion of the work of a film is not enough by praising how great the aspect of the making is without focussing on the aspect of the content of the film itself. The issue of religious open-mindedness depicted by Yasmin is too linear so much so that it is tantamount to the concept of liberalism and plurality of religion.

It turns out that the arrangement of the plot of Muallaf is too slow and steady as opposed to the issue that Yasmin tries to bring forward. The background of Muallaf is so calm and peaceful through the portrayal of the community in the city of Ipoh who live in harmony by respecting one another despite differences of religion and culture. Muallaf revolves around the story of two sisters, Rohani and Rohana, who have run away from their father – a *Datuk* (somebody with an honorary title) – who is a drunkard. They live next to their neighbour Brian Yap (Rohana's teacher) in a (massive) bungalow owned by their late mother's friend. The plot of Muallaf develops when Rohana is scolded and beaten by Mrs. Siva and Brian offers to take Rohana home. This becomes the plot point that makes Brian and Rohani meet and thus gives Brian an opportunity to closely get to know the two sisters namely Rohani and Rohana.

In Muallaf, Yasmin tries to invite the audience to think together about the concept of religion that is more open and that greater love is not for human beings but for searching for true and eternal love which is for the Creator. However, Yasmin also touches on religious sensitivities and create controversy when there is a subplot act in which Rohani is shaved bald.

Looking at the aspect of story originality, Yasmin Ahmad films have their own uniqueness. Her films are clearly original and different from other Malay films in Malaysia. Furthermore, it is the story originality existing in her films that has made her manage to win international awards. Muallaf also has the quality of storyline originality which is different from that of other Malay films. Issues of religious tolerance are not directly discussed in Malay films in Malaysia. Yet Yasmin Ahmad is bold enough to go against the streamline in championing this religious openness by way of depictions of values of humanity and love in Muallaf. In spite of that, the lack of understanding about the concept of comparative theological studies and Islamic studies will create confusion for those who do not quite understand the development of the true Islamic knowledge.

Portraying Islam as being the same as other world religion could probably be Yasmin's biggest mistake. The religious theme as evinced through Muallaf has to be more scrupulous in translating the true beauty of Islam, not equating Islam with other world religions. This image of Muallaf is seen as a failure in giving the convincing intensity of the impact. The stream of religion brought by Yasmin is too liberal and open in such a way that it fails to give a better interpretation to Islam.

Muallaf is a work that is not easy to understand. The characters and character traits created by Yasmin are unique and difficult to perceive. The characters Rohani and Rohana are too far more mature than their actual ages. Their competency in putting forward arguments and making comparisons in an intellectual way exhibits fake and pretentious characters. There do not exist youngsters their age who make solid arguments by using proofs by means of Quranic *surah*s and verse numbers as well as texts from other teachings such as those of Tao Te Ching and St. Augustine.

Yasmin describes Rohani and Rohana as youths who have great interests in knowledge, high spiritual and humanitarian qualities, and tendency to make an in-depth study of Islam. Alas, their characters are not manifested by the true Islamic dressing code and *akhlaq*. They seem to fail to understand Islam thoroughly and this does not suit their deep knowledge on the concept of *Uluhiyyah* and *Rububiyyah tauhid* that they understand. Nevertheless, in terms of other *akhlaq* aspects it is clear that they are Muslims who are forgiving, spirually strict and unsuspicios of others. The values of love that exist in their souls reflect how great their connection with Allah s.w.t (*Subhanahu wa Taʿala*) is.

As for the aspect of *ibadah*, Rohana and Rohani also display the responsibilities of true Muslims such as performing the *salah* immediately (at the early prayer time) when hearing the *azan* (prayer call). Besides, they are depicted as two sisters who always perform congregational prayers and make a daily practice of Quranic recitation.

The dialogue expressed by the characaters in Muallaf is philosophical and high-flown.

ROHANI
I think we should learn Arabic by referring to someone knowledgeable
ROHANA
Why?
ROHANI
What if the translator makes a mistake? We don't even understand *tauhid uluhiyyah* and *tauhid rububiyyah*.

ROHANA
There are many versions from different translators. We make comparative studies or we can learn Arabic and attend *tafsir* (Quranic exegesis) classes.
ROHANI
But teachers, like translators, have differences of opinion.
ROHANA
That's right. I know. I think we can make comparative studies as we always do. Some of them have made *fatwa* among themselves.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this study show that Syurga Cinta and Muallaf still do not debate religious values according to the true Islamic *daʿwah*. These films still revolve around problems of life conflicts. Syurga Cinta is too far from belonging to the category of *daʿwah* or Islamic film. This is because this film does not clearly discuss the Islamic *shariah* which is the foundation of the true *daʿwah* concept. As for Muallaf, it brings up elements of humanity and love more than the religious value itself. The concept of liberal religion depicted in Muallaf does not show the effect of the special characteristic of Islam itself compared to other religions such as Christianity. This trend of thought will cause Muslims to be influenced by religious freedom that is always championed by the West.

Through the analysis that has been conducted, it can be concluded that the films "Syurga Cinta" and "Muallaf" still cannot be categorised as films that are fully Islamic. In fact, they are far outside the *daʿwah*

film category. Both films only bring up religious (Islamic) elements but are still mixed up with things that are not in line with the true Islamic *daᶜwah* concept. Besides portraying elements of the purity of Islam, Syurga Cinta also portrays promiscuously free life styles and free mingling of the sexes. Questions of major sins like fornication/adultery and drinking liquor also become the narrative evinced by Syurga Cinta in such a way that this film is viewed as one that is blemished and derailed from its original purpose which is to bring the perfect image of Islam. Therefore the film "Syurga Cinta" does not fulfill the requirement of the Islamic *daᶜwah* concept that enjoins right conduct and forbids indecency as it displays debauchery like free sex and the drinking of liqour, which will certainly give bad effects to the audience. As for "Muallaf," it is not a direct *daᶜwah* film either. Its plot and narrative revolve around humanity and loving care portrayed through the religious freedom of Malaysian society. Also, through these two films, the characters and character traits evinced do not portray the actual Muslim Malay image inside and outside the films. This confusion can be seen that the *Islam* depicted in a film is merely the issue and theme of the film, which is not related to the life of the actors outside the film.

Malay films nowadays are more straightforward in portraying the reality of the society's life to the extent that the boundaries of social life and religious belief are overlooked. Perhaps the purifying efforts (to purify the films in question) have to be made in the efforts to use the film medium as an influential means to bring the society and audience back closer to better religious life. Therefore, it can be concluded that Malay films in Malaysia still cannot be placed in the category of *daᶜwah* film. What exist in Malaysia are films with Islamic elements that have a mixture of *haq* (right) and *batil* (wrong). Good *daᶜwah* films do

not have to merely depend on elements of indecency to fulfil the desires of neglectful human beings. Iranian and Indonesion films such as Children of Heaven and Ketika Cinta Bertasbih (While Love is Glorifying Allah in Remembrance of Him) are examples of *daᶜwah* films that do not sacrifice the Islamic principle "*amar maᶜruf* and *nahi munkar*". Hence, the use of film as the communication medium for *daᶜwah* is seen as a new medium that can be explored in the efforts to make *daᶜwah* upon the audience who are fond of entertainment.

Films can be seen as an alternative communication medium for those wishing to get closer to Allah. The *Daᶜwah* Communication Model can be assimilated from the basic model of communication. What has to be emphasized is the Islamic message that must be conveyed to the audience. Film makers – whether they are Muslim actors, producers, or directors – serve as *daᶜwah* preachers who are supposed to understand the concept of *daᶜwah* clearly in order to carry the message of Islam in the most honest manner through film. What matters most is that the whole film production has to reflect true *akhlaq* and Islamic characteristics. They have to understand that they are *daᶜwah* preachers who struggle for propagating the Islamic *daᶜwah* to society by means of films. Hence, the soul and the conveying method must be purified of various influences such as fame and material things. The final objective of *daᶜwah* is to attain Allah's pleasure (Allah's being pleased with His servant) and thus get closer to Him, the Supreme Creator (Figure 3).

Society needs films that could display lifestyles and cultures according to religion. This is because film is not merely a sketch drawing on a canvas that is void of content fulfilment in terms of values and religion. Every display of an act and dialogue evinced through film is capable of expressing the integrity of a nation and religion. Films that are
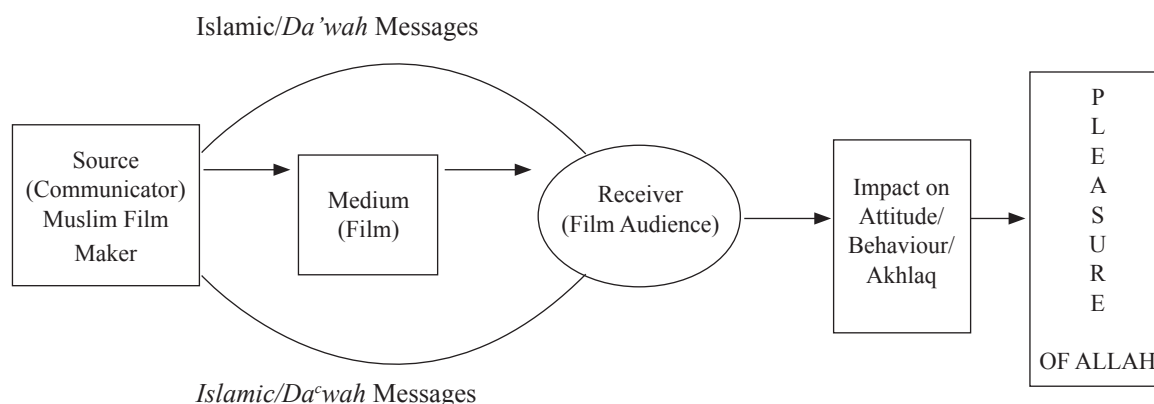
Islamic/*Da'wah* Messages

FIGURE 3. *Daᶜwah* Communication Model Assimilated Through Harold Laswell Communication Model (1948)

elevated from the context of religion should be clear about questions of *hukm*, firmness of *aqidah* and the Islamic *shariah*. Religious scholars who uphold the implementation of Islamic *da^cwah* have to view film as an area that can be used for effective *da^cwah* efforts. The involvement of *da^cwah* preachers in the field of media and film has to be supported and praised. This is because *da^cwah* preachers who are knowledgeable about *da^cwah* and religious matters could contribute towards producing film scripts that are more Islamic and have *da^cwah* messages.

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