

## CHARACTER BUILDING THROUGH TRADITIONAL DANCE AS DEVELOPING IDENTITY BELONGINGS: A STUDY OF INDONESIA-MALAYSIA

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### Abstract

The title above shows that if a person learns a traditional dance of a specific community, they unconsciously learn about the culture and the moral values of the community too, which is beneficial to them. According to Hughes (2009), the learning process of traditional dance covers four different learning's ethics: (1) discipline; (2) courtesy and respect; (3) socialize and not arrogant; (4) consistency and confidence. This four ethics can be analyzed in an integrated manner on the textual and contextual of a traditional dance. Among other things: dancing is actually a skill capability that will not be achieved without strong discipline to practice continuously. Salam hormatin the form of squat's motion, both hands brought together in front of the chest or in the direction of the guest (organized into ten fingers) as initiating a traditional dance. This act is actually to educate the polite nature and mutual respect toward each other. Empirically, dance can be used as a medium of learning in the intimate and socialize formations. The beauty of dance itself can be achieved with simultaneous movement or uniform. Every motion that made by the whole body is the vision of the intellectual character's build, discipline, art and spiritual, creative and fear of God. So that, the process that must be undertaken in learning a dance is not just memorizing the movement of the dance as a text, but the dancers need to keep planting the values of it in their life. It is importance as it helps to led the process of personality's formation which is guide to responsibility and sharing to achieve the goal to always be independent and have their own true identity.

**Keywords:** Character's Development, Traditional Dance, Dance Lessons, True Identity

### A. INTRODUCTION: DEVELOPMENT/CHARACTER EDUCATION AND TRADITIONAL DANCE

The target of this title is not only bound to the formal education teacher at schools but it also addressed to activist who own art services in the fields of performing arts especially the art of a dance as a non-formal institution that attracted people. That non-formal institution fosters an active dancer and trains them for an offering of an assembly. That institution or agency also called as a dance studio or dance club. Even though the dance's studio or the dancer themselves developed this dance in the form of creation but their performances still referring to the traditional values that express the local culture. This is due to their performance which they still do appear in some customary ceremonial events such as a wedding, the coronation of the prince and the official government's events. As time passed, this creative dance was developed and was considered as a traditional dance for its own beauty because of the environment that surrounded the growth of this dance. Character's building is important to debate since the moral values in our community is no longer adapted and there is moral issues like brawling, argumentation between the students, sexual assault, corruption and bad influence of social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other. It needs to be stop for our own younger generation. Globalization had provided all facility like enhancement the communication system, information and transportation. But some people have misuse the positive thing and turn it into the bad things for their own benefits and it gave bad influence to the community around. (Tilaar, 1993:3).

Western's countries mostly love to explore the rationality that affecting Eastern countries including Indonesia and Malaysia. Even Korean fashion trend's culture cannot avoid the free market or the global markets such as on-line trading that strongly influence people's lifestyles. As a result, the community continues to grow and undergo a process of the transformation that is in transition or in the atmosphere that is chaotic. Even though the traditional values are still strongly inherent to the young generation but when the globalization come so strong, it fill the open space in the community and lead to the change of social life among them. Hence, the birth of global culture (which) is Encompassing the world at the international level (Robertson, 1992: 5). Consequently, the cultural norms like tradition, moral values and religion's spiritualism that is usually practice by the community will fade away for the influence of the globalization.

The condition of life in global culture really hit the ethics and moral values of the generation, so that it need to be build and mold for the education either in the formal or non-formal way. This phenomenon will seize serious attention from all direction; government and the community. Both art of dance and theater need to restore to recover, maintained and preserved the cultural values for the younger generation. The cultural values

and moral ethics that contain cultural heritage should exist in the form of art, especially traditional dance or classical dance that grows in the community.

The traditional dance is actually one of a portion of the traditional art which is an art that originated and is rooted in the social cultural life of the community. This actually one of the reason that the community to feel the art that has grown and evolved around them. The process is based on the taste of supporter's community who has the tradition cultural values, way of life, philosophy approach, and a sense of ethics and aesthetic. By that, the result of the product of arts can be accepted by the society as a legacy or inherited to the young generation. (Ahmad, 1991: 40). At first, traditional dance only dedicated to the religious activities and customs. But then, after some research and study about the traditional values, it was permitted to use in the educational purposes, for specific purposes in the education (Kraus, 1964: 4, Rina, 2012:21). Even though family is the first institution to educate people but then the dance also is a subject that has a role in the process of character building. If a person learn all about the dance since they were primary or secondary school, than the school is no longer just a place for that person to improving their intellectual but it also a place to develop a characters (soft skill and spiritual skills).

Character building can be define as an attempt to establish a personality of a person trough education that the result can be seen throughout good behavior, honest, responsible, respective, hard work on so on. The potential of true self in one character can continuously develop during the process of education (Lickona, 1991 in Guskey, 2012: 122). The final hope is to have learners that capable to have an integrity that is reflected in their everyday life, both in God and human beings and the surrounding. Ki Hajar Dewantoro (1937) have suggested the values that is needed to learn the art is "understand – feel – act –" (aware, realizing and doing), which can be used as a starting point of character in learning dance (Kuswarsantiyo in Sumaryono, 2013: 161). This is actually implies on a "Character Education" which is define as a form of education and teaching that focusses on the attitudes and action of student to appreciates and implement the character values in their daily behavior.

Indonesian government have done a great thing which is the contain of President Instructs (Inpres) Republic Indonesia, number 1 in years 2010 have completed the curriculum that based on a "character education" with an active education and based on a values of cultural race. (Kuswarsantiyo in Sumaryono, 2013: 160). Then a team of educational character from Ministry of Education and Cultural develop a grand design that give an illustration about the configuration of character and the total context of psychologist process and social cultural. It was divided into four which is: intellectual development; spiritual and emotional development, physical and kinesthetic development and affective and creative development. It is illustrated in the diagram below:



Picture 1: Grand Design of Configuration Character

Source : Team of Educational Character of Ministry of Cultural and Education, 2010.

The design can be understood that the main elements of the noble values and character behaviors are: (1) treating the mind are closely related to intelligence, (2) process that includes careful attitude of honest and responsible, (3) exercise to form the soul clean and healthy physical, (4) if the feeling and intention is a form of awareness and creative.

## B. TRADITIONAL DANCE AS AN ALTERNATIVE FOR INDONESIAN'S CHARACTER BUILDING

Back then, dance was taught by the artist at Keraton or palace and in an ethnic's environment where the dance is developed through out Indonesia. However, the development of transportation and technological advances has change the community which is the traditional dance is not any longer practice at the origin place but propagated to other places. Along with the development of education and government attention, the art was

included into the curriculum at school or college started from 1960. After that, dance school grows rapidly within the educational institution either formal or non-formal. The development of the dance was taken over by this institution.

But the truth is, the learning process of the dance is not only focussing on the technique, body posture, the network of movement and the strength to dance but it also focussing on learning outcome (learning outcome that need to be achieve) that need to transfer all the moral value of cultural and have and a good relation that have soft skills. Soft skills consist of (1) communication skills (2) critical thinking and problem solving skills (3)continuous learning and information management (4) Team work skills (5) leadership skills (6) entrepreneur skills (7) professional ethics and moral. (Ministry of Education in Malaysia, 2006: 8).

Dance is one of the medium in character building that help to conquer all 7 criteria of soft skills above and it will give many benefit to the learner themselves. The traditional dance is not about how well a person can perform, but that person need to know and apply the movement and the beauty of the body language. The reason for this is the traditional dance has its own value and all the movement have actually symbolize something so that the learners need to feel the beauty of the dance to create and build a good mental either individually or in a group. It give a benefits to the learners which is they can know the cultural with a creative thinking and give expressive themselves with a happy soul. When a dancer move all is body with an expressive, they can memorize all the network of movement in the particular dance. The dancers who are able to give an expressive to their dance have actually successfully delivered the moral value of the dance. The idea and the feeling of dance that has been design by the educational character of Ministry of Cultural and Education can be reaching in the learning process. All the good value can be seen in each of the steps and movement of the dance below.

Gerak Sambah is one of the steps which need to apply in all types of dance. It can be in the form of bend, or standing straight like in a Zapin or sitting position in a "Tarian Piring". This step or position is actually symbolized bridge of a respect. Desmon Morris (1977: 24, 27) said that the part of our body symbolize the communication or respect is our hand. The movement of hand can be more meaningful when it comes with an expression in your face and a little movement of the head. Both hand and all finger need to be in the vertical position and then place it to the eyebrow or forehead. Other than that, both of the hand and fingers need to be in the vertical position and place to the chest. These symbolize a respect.



Picture 2: Respecting or greeting move in *Piring* Dance  
(Nerosti's Document, Tarian Piring's reconstruction at Negeri Sembilan, 2013)

The strength of the tradition's values in social also can be seen though the movement of Randai. Randai is a Minangkabau's traditional theater that contains elements of dance, vocal, dialogue and a story. It also has a special movement which is in the form of circle. The number of dancer also play an important role to the beauty of this dance as it can be beautifully perform if there is 10 or more dancer. They will move in a bending position and simultaneously they move higher-up and also tapped their central portion of pants with a large model which is called as galembong. In the same time, the dancers footwork will lift up like a duck then touched the floor slowly or bit by bit and with the simultaneous vocal, they insist on the dance called garak jo garik and gelek. *Tukang goreh* will act as a commando that lead all the movement with a command like *ap, ta, ti, has... huasss...* This command is for all the change of the movement and it is obediently done by the other dancers or randai. Meanwhile, *tapuak galembong* recognized by its sound. Sometimes the players will shouting out loud and say *hep ta hep has*. The sound *hepta hep has* is actually produce a rhythm that full of energetic and excited. The movement is so uniquely composed with dynamic gentle motion, sharp, swinging, energetic but yet still guided to the *kuda-kuda* and *siku-siku* that based on *pencah*. The movement based more on ready alert parried, endurance, agility as careful steps for boys. The movement of Randai can be done without practices and

disciplinary and also a group work to develop the beauty of the movement. It also needs to be simultaneously done with a vocal group to produce a great sound. Their movement started with worship (sembah) with ten fingers and ends up with sitting. They will bring their hands to the chest and then sitting with a cross-legged style. All the movement above actually teach about the (1)discipline (2) manners and respect, (3) humble and socialize (4) consistence and confident (Hughes 2009:162-170).

The movement that performed simultaneously by dancers with traditional patterns in some of traditional dance is not only a salute or the beauty of uniformity of motion per se, but it also symbolize the importance role of social ethics in a society carried by the dancer (Hermien, 2006:11).The relationship between a dancer with another dancers describe the mutual linking and the need of one another. It also accepted as part of a wonderful society. Other examples can be found in a dance performance by Saman from Aceh, played by men. Saman performance show that Syech is a leader that followed by the dancers. All his command was followed obediently. By refusing the command, the physical structure and the lack of uniform movement cannot be avoid. The beauty of the Saman dance is favoring the composition of the uniformity of the nation but if this cannot be achieved, the dancers themselves and the audience cannot enjoy the beauty of this dance. In one scene, Syech will put them sat together and do the same composition and simultaneous motion with the other dancers for the demands of the beauty of a dancer in the show.

The good relation between the leaders and the members of randai should not be just an art of Saman dance but the togetherness should always be applied in every moment in the real life. It is thus proposed by Royce (1977: 136) that:

Dance is not only related to the dancers and the audience but it is also play an important role in term of socio-cultural aspect. Traits that determine the overall pattern of the dance is develop trough an imitation and interaction between members of society. Thus, it developing an identity mark institutionalized. Each motion of pattern is called as a style. The style is composed by the symbols and form that based on adopted orientation values, believed and internalized within the community group.

The teacher can gives a message or values while demonstrated a series of motion in a learning process. Another example is one of the movements on the “Tarian Piring” which is movement of bacamin. The motion and the movement can be pictured like: the right hand swung to the side in a semi-circle so right in front of the plate’ front face is facing the dancers as if in a mirror, then the motion met with the left hands by doing the same motion, which is essentially a mirror. At a glance, it is as a reflection of preening or set and marked a face which is it is fully done touched up or not. The reflect motion is actually had a profound meaning as in the proverbs “ Look at yourself into the mirror first”, which mean that a person need to look at themselves first before anyone notice the good or bad are they. In other words, each person needs to obtain introspective harmony in the society. In this case, the traditional Minangkabau proverb says “bajalan peliharolah kaki, bakato peliharolah lidah”. It means that we need to be careful in walking as well as to see, so it does not hurt another’s feeling. That leader’s opinion can be referred to the Minangkabau proverb proverbial book (Hakimi, 1991:38).

### **C. THE DEVELOPMENT OF DANCE IN MALAYSIA AS THE DEVELOPING IDENTITY BELONGINGS**

Malaysia tends to be easily influenced by foreign cultures as impact of the rapid development. Some of the discussion forum starts to discuss a topic that related to the cultural values and the personals. It is related to the term in accordance with the local culture/host. Since the last 10 years, Malaysia has opened a discussion on “strengthening identity”. Identity is understood as a trait or characteristic that is unique and special in term of customs, language, religions and so on. It also touched on the porch and the epitome’s trait of an individual or a set which is regarded as one of the identity of nation. The discussion and talks about the identity of the local Malay culture has begun gradually fade as the effects of globalization have been conducted in various forum.

Malaysia is a country that is very opens to foreign a country that has experienced acceleration in economic sectors and transport. Other country that has experienced the same things is Arab which is popular with their art, Persian and India. Siti Zainon (1993) also confirmed the result of communication with outside cultures give an impact toward the Malay culture and art which it is also underwent for an evolution. Ahmad Kamal (1994: 9) also said that the Malay culture is open to foreign influence eventually also absorbing or play a role in the development of foreign art. Ligation is confirmed also by the opinion of the Wan Kadir Mohd. Nefi Imran (2000:5) which is:

Malaysia dance in the southern Peninsula is also heavily influenced by the type and form of the dance from Indonesia. This is because of the migration of people from Indonesia archipelago to the region, such as Javanese and Minangkabau. The other dances that brought from Sumatera is:Randai, tari Selendang, tarian Lilin, tarian Payung, Serampang Dua Belas, Mak Inang Pulau Kampai, Empat serangkai dan Ragam Andalas. In the North of Kelantan and Siam, the element

of dance was influenced by the region such as dance of Menora and Rambong. Meanwhile the Malay traditional dance developed in conformity with nature and the nature of their district.

Imran (2011: 16) which makes the study of anthropology of Malay Dance find that the dance that evolved throughout the countries that exist in Malaysia is amazingly growing. Through the National Dance Festival (FTK), dance that developed in each country will be reconstructing and choreographed by several of people.

The exact time of the development of dance in Malaysia cannot be detected but in general it was developed since 1956 which is the chronology of Malay dance has been dedicated to the celebration and feast contest, games and dance festival held in Malaysia, which can be explained as follows:

(1) In 1956 to 1970 it is known as the celebration of the Feast or Dance contest. (2) The 1970's -1980's known as a dance contest and game. (3) The 1980's-1990's referred as a Match and Dance Festival, (4) the 1990's to early 2001 known as offering dance or dance games or dance festival. (5) In 1992, the appearance of a dance program that involving all the countries in Malaysia. (6) In 1993 and 2001 it is called as a National Dance Festival. (7) Year 2002 known as Malaysian Dance Festival. In 1992 the program as a national dance in Malaysia was held and called as a Art Competition Between Countries, then 1993 to 2001 the dance games have replaced the term with the National Dance Festival (FTK) (Imran 2011:22).

FTK is actually one of the ways of forming an identity in Malaysia dance. FTK provides the foundation with emphasis on the discipline of dance while referring to the definition of "Malay" in Malaysia which promotes the perspective of a country which is follow the pattern of Malay culture and society. The concept of Malay dance is there is no mixing between male and female dancers even though it is choreographed with a creative form.

Wilkinson (1925) has proposed that the mixing between men and women in a ceremony dance is not encouraged. It is to keep the moral interest and avoiding "social disaster". As well as Wan Abdul Kasir (1988) says: it is a concern for decision makers in the Malaysia as there is an atmosphere in the nexus between dance and culture within Islam itself. But on the other hand, Wilkinson also said that: the arrival of Islam does not hinder the development of music and dance. No matter how trained, children were still dancing and singing as the body movement is a symbol for a good treatment. Wahid Wan Hassan Wan (1988) also states that: "it is an evident for instance in Malaysian society where religion, laws and interest of other families are taken about the yield in producing a work of art or offering the influence. Maintaining the aspect of Islamic culture to be developed indirectly is the challenge. Other states that distinguishes the true meaning of the Malay culture is China, India and the nation of Europe in Malaysia. Therefore, the Islamic civilization that is growing very supportive based on the general notion characteristic upward Malaysian Malay dance. Thus Malay dance in Malaysia still has the traits and character of its own in accordance with the Malay culture.

As we can see, the form of clothing or costumes clearly transfer the Malay cultural values for both men and women who wear songket meanwhile the male dancers express the sideline of the Koran in the mosque. Malay is known for poetry and poem that contain an education's value which is still be practice as a Zapin dance.

#### **The Lyric for Pantun Budi by Tan Sri SM Salim**

*Kalau menebang si pohon jati,  
Papan di Jawa dibelah-belah;  
Kalaulah hidup tidak berbudi,  
Upama pokok tidak berbuah*

*Bunga selasih si bunga padi,  
Kembanglah mekar di dalam taman;  
Pertama kasih kedua budi,  
Yang mana satu nak didulukan*

The traditional Festival Dance started since the National Dance Festival in 1993 and 2001 up until today but using other names such as the Arts Foundation of Johor still has Zapin Nusantara Festival program. The festival involves 4 countries which is Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei and Singapore. In 2012, the Zapin Festival Johor Malaysia has established a center of Zapin Nusantara. Mostly, the group that performed at the festival is a group from Indonesia like Mesan, Riau, Sulawesi, Jambi and Kalimantan. However, due to the Malaysian Government, Zapin Johor pay more attention to the development and a success of the Foundation of Johor Festival Zapin Nusantara once in 2 years, then inevitably end up With Malaysia who deserves to be the center of Zapin Nusantara.



Picture 3: Zapin Dancer Paddle by man (Imran, 2011: 56)  
And Zapin Mahpom danced by women (Imran, 2011:64)

Zapin's philosophy according to Anis (2009: 93), it takes an event of alphabets Aliff that shows a movement on the floor climbing over fallen logs. The movement that symbolizes the journey of the life will continue over and over again and it is repeatedly mimicking the steps which are in a backward and forward movement.

#### D. CONCLUSION

Based on the description above, we can conclude that:

1. The building of Character can be done through traditional dance lessons along with the enactment of the curriculum which takes the theme of character education. Learning traditional dance should produce a product that oriented to a culture mind, ethics and human morality in accordance with the symbols of the dance movement that contains content of cultural values, which must to inherited by younger generation.
2. Implementation of Character Education through learning traditional dance is one of the efforts to create a basis for the development of the character of the nation. Therefore, the government's attention is indispensable in fostering traditional arts in their place grow and develop. The important of socio-cultural's environment of the place where the traditional dance is origin need to be highlight as it is the source that is conducive to the students, both in terms of family, school and especially a civilized society. It is a determination of a transferring these values and a strong basic for the development of the nation's character.
3. Building character and identity formation through dance should be done in an intellectual, creative, and quality. (1) In reference to the intellectual strength of the theory of dance education. (2) The creative through dance works by providing space for learners to move more freely. Learning is using methods such creative dance education. Learning creative dance is also based on the traditional forms of motion. Master teacher of traditional dance and be able to distinguish a traditional dance and contemporary movement. (3) Construction of a high quality is more concerned about the height of an appreciation of a work of dance. Understand the philosophical and aesthetic dance, because dance is a symbol. Dance works that are processed in class or viewed with more learners can develop a moral nation. This work style/style, creating the nation's identity.
4. The role of Teachers, activist or artist's of dance as a centre for education and centre of cultural institution, very important in developing and advancing the science of human civilization. therefore let teachers become role models for students.
5. According to Bloom's theory (1975), the teachers should be empowering their soft skill. He said that: (1) empowerment intellectual or realm thinking/cognitive domain; (2) the practise of the values in the formation of the attitudes and moral values or affective domain and (3) debriefing skills or physical skills/psychomotor domain (Guskey, 2012: 143). The three domain are also in a line with the Grand Design Configuration Characters compiled by The Ministry of Cultural and Education which is: (1) the level of intelligence/intellectual who is called "a process to think", (2) honesty and sense of responsibilities, (3) healthy and hygiene or "sport" and (4) concern and creativity or "if the sense of intention", which is the steps to realize the "noble values and the behaviour of character". Opinion was

also in line with Hughes (2009) says that the learning process of traditional dance covers four different learning's ethics: (1) discipline; (2) courtesy and respect; (3) socialize and not arrogant; (4) consistency and confidence.

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