

**COMPARING THE CONCEPT OF SUFISM AS PORTRAYED IN
KAHLIL GIBRAN'S *THE PROPHET* AND RAJA ALI HAJI'S *GURINDAM*
*DUA BELAS***

A GRADUATING PAPER

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement
for Gaining the Bachelor's Degree in English Literature



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Motto

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا

Quran, (2/282)



DEDICATION

This graduating paper is dedicated to:

My Family, Friends, Lectures, and the reader of this research.





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Assalamu'alaikum Wr. Wb

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kami menyatakan bahwa skripsi tersebut sudah dapat diajukan pada sidang Munaqosyah untuk memenuhi salah satu syarat memperoleh gelar Sarjana Sastra Inggris.

Atas perhatiannya, kami mengucapkan terima kasih.

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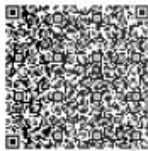
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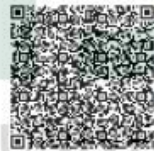
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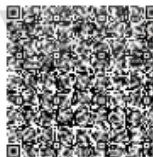
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Final Project Statement

A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

I certify that this graduate paper is definitely my own work. I am completely responsible for the content of this graduating paper. Other researcher's opinion or finding included in this research is quoted or cited in accordance with ethical standards.

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Yogyakarta, December 12, 2024



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**Comparing The Concept of Sufism as Portrayed In Kahlil Gibran's The
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ABSTRACT

This research aims to determine the meaning of Sufism and how it is portrayed in Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet* and Raja Ali Haji's *Gurindam Dua Belas*, including their similarities and differences. The study uses Michael Riffaterre's semiotic theory, which includes heuristic and hermeneutic readings, indirect expression, matrix, model and variant analysis, and hypogram identification. The findings indicate that while Sufism is not the main topic in *The Prophet*, its traces are evident, particularly in the chapters on prayer, religion, and death. The study also finds that *Gurindam Dua Belas* directly conveys Islamic teachings, with explicit mentions of terms related to Islamic values. Despite differences in writing structure, both works predominantly use metaphors and metonymy, with *The Prophet* leaning towards a more poetic and mystical tone, while *Gurindam Dua Belas* is straightforward and easily understood. The research concludes that Islamic Sufism influenced the creation of *The Prophet*, particularly in the portrayal of prayer and religion, and the perception of death as the end of life, aligning with Sufism's goal to unite humanity and their gods through *makrifat*. On the other hand, *Gurindam Dua Belas* directly incorporates various aspects of Sufism, including *Syara'a*, *tariqah*, *al-Haqq*, and *ma'rifat*, in accordance with Islamic values.

Keywords: Sufism, Kahlil Gibran, *Gurindam dua belas*

Comparing The Concept of Sufism as Portrayed In Kahlil Gibran's The Prophet And Raja Ali Haji's *Gurindam Dua belas*

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui makna tasawuf dan bagaimana tasawuf digambarkan dalam karya Kahlil Gibran *The Prophet* dan *Gurindam dua belas* karya Raja Ali Haji, serta persamaan dan perbedaan keduanya. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori semiotika Michael Riffaterre yang meliputi (1) pembacaan heuristik dan hermeneutik, (2) ekspresi tidak langsung, (3) matriks, model dan varian, dan (4) hipogram. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun tasawuf bukanlah topik utama dalam *The Prophet*, jejak-jejaknya terlihat jelas, terutama pada bab tentang doa, agama, dan kematian. Studi ini juga menemukan bahwa *Gurindam dua belas* secara langsung menyampaikan ajaran Islam, dengan penyebutan istilah-istilah yang terkait dengan nilai-nilai Islam secara eksplisit. Meskipun terdapat perbedaan dalam struktur penulisan, kedua karya tersebut sama-sama menggunakan metafora dan metonimi secara dominan, dengan *The Prophet* cenderung ke arah nada yang lebih puitis dan mistis, sedangkan *Gurindam dua belas* lugas dan mudah dipahami. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa tasawuf Islam memengaruhi penciptaan *The Prophet*, terutama dalam penggambaran doa dan agama, serta pandangan tentang kematian sebagai akhir kehidupan, yang selaras dengan tujuan tasawuf untuk menyatukan manusia dengan Tuhannya melalui makrifat. Di sisi lain, *Gurindam dua belas* secara langsung memasukkan berbagai aspek tasawuf, termasuk Syara'a, tariqah, al-Haqq, dan ma'rifat, sesuai dengan nilai-nilai Islam.

Kata kunci: Sufisme, Kahlil Gibran, *Gurindam dua belas*

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Sufism or Islamic mysticism is considered to hold a significant role in Islam. According to Ibn Khaldun, humans have three potentials that must always be clean, healthy, efficient, and able to work in harmony. The first is the five senses which, according to *Fiqh*, can be cleaned with *taharah*, the second is the mind that can be moved and straightened by philosophy, and the third is the heart that can be cleaned with *Tasawuf* or also known as Sufism. (Milahudin, 2020, p. 179). Sufism itself has various definitions, both in terms of language and in the opinions of experts. There are approximately two thousand definitions and interpretations of Sufism proposed by scholars from various perspectives. This demonstrates that the sincere human desire to connect with God can be achieved through a multitude of paths. Some experts argue that the term Sufism did not exist in the early days of Islamic development. Even the term Sufism itself does not exist in the Holy Quran (Usman, 2014, p. 130).

Muhammad Amin Kurdi explained that Sufism is a science of knowing and purifying the soul from bad qualities (*tazkiyat al-anfus*) so humans can face God in a pure heart condition (Milahuddin, 2020, p 197). In general, Sufism can be defined as a science to purify the soul, clarify morals, and build physically and mentally to obtain eternal happiness. That is the harmonious relationship between man and God, or Allah. The people who practice Sufism are also known as Sufis.

There are four levels that must be passed by a *Sufi* or practitioners of Sufism in their spiritual journey. *Syara'a* or legal provisions made by *Allah* for human life, *tariqah* or ways to get closer to *Allah*, *al-Haqq* which means essential truth, and *ma'rifat* which means knowledge or experience (Milahudin, 2020, p. 179). Many Sufi figures live their lives with asceticism, draw closer to Allah and distance themselves from worldly things.

The presence of Sufism has influenced various fields, including literature. In Islamic studies, the discipline most closely aligned with literature is Sufism (Manshur, 1999, p. 102). One of the writers who got the influence of Sufism in his work is Kahlil Gibran. It is because Gibran comes from Lebanon, where most people follow Islam. Although Gibran moved to the United States at the age of twelve, Gibran returned to Lebanon for several years to study at *Collège de la Sagesse* in Beirut.

Gibran wrote "*The Prophet*" which was published in 1923, which has been translated into over a hundred languages. This places it among the top ten most translated books globally in history (Kalem, 2018). In *The Prophet*, Gibran explores universal themes such as love, spirituality, and freedom while maintaining the elegant writing style characteristic of his other works. He seemingly encourages readers to engage critically with his work, ensuring *The Prophet* remains relevant for reading and research even today, nearly a century after its publication.

In essence, *The Prophet* narrates the story of Al Mustafa, who has resided for twelve years in the city of *Orphalese*. One day a ship came to *Orphalese*, and

Al Mustafa would return to where he belonged. The people of *Orphalapse* love Al Mustofa so much that they don't want Al Mustofa to leave. Almitra, a seeress, asks Al Mustofa to advise everyone who asks him. Al Mustofa's advice is written in twenty-six chapters containing various things ranging from love, marriage, children, giving, eating and drinking, work, joy and sorrow, houses, clothes, buying and selling, crime and punishment, laws, freedom, reason and passion, pain, self-knowledge, teaching, friendship, talking, time, good and evil, prayer, pleasure, beauty, religion, and death. The general structure of *The Prophet* is presented as a series of dialogues. Each chapter features a question posed by an individual, to which Gibran, through the character of Al Mustafa, provides a response.

Something is interesting about *The Prophet*; the book does not look like a story but rather like a poem containing advice on various life aspects. There are many figurative words used in the sentence. For example,

*"...And if you would know God, be not therefore a solver of riddles.
Rather look about you and you shall see Him playing with your children.
And look into space; you shall see Him walking in the cloud,
outstretching His arms in the lightning and descending in rain.
You shall see Him smiling in flowers, then rising and waving His hands in trees."*

(Gibran, 121/1923)

The sentence above is a dialogue between Al Mustafa and a priest who asked him about religion. From the above sentence, we can see Gibran making parables about God that are packaged in beautiful language and full of metaphors so that if the sentence above were interpreted, it would have various meanings. This reminds us of Malay literature by Raja Ali Haji on the island of *Penyengat* exactly

seventy-six years before *The Prophet* was published. This work is known as *Gurindam Dua Belas*.

Gurindam Dua Belas itself is an old Malay poem consisting of twelve chapters. It contains advice and life instructions to achieve the pleasure of Allah. Raja Ali Haji stated that the *gurindam* is a type of poetry where the rhyming couplets form a complete thought. The first line presents a condition or proposition, and the second line provides the consequence or conclusion (Akmal, 2015, p. 163). Besides that, *Gurindam 12* also contains four basic teachings of Sufism, *Syara'a*, *tariqah*, *al-Haqq*, and *ma'rifa*. Especially in the first chapter (Rakhmawati and Mujiyanto, 2018, p. 7). *Gurindam 12* itself was created by Raja Ali Haji because he was concerned for the younger generation due to the rampant Portuguese influence in Malacca, which brought western culture, which was contrary to the Islamic culture that the Malay people had embraced.

These two literary works have several similarities, including their arrangement, which consists of several chapters, each of which is explained by imagery so that some sentences are complex for ordinary people to understand. Both *The Prophet* and *Gurindam Dua Belas* contain advice about life. For instance, within the *Gurindam Dua Belas*, there exists guidance on choosing friends, respecting parents, and even how to be a benevolent ruler. Similarly, Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet* offers advice on communicating with one's spouse, raising children, working, worshipping, and even perspectives and counsel on death. These counsels suggest that both literary works potentially impart Sufi values, either explicitly or implicitly.

Apart from having some similarities, these two literary works also have some differences. The most obvious is the language difference because *The Prophet* was composed by Gibran in English, while *Gurindam Dua Belas* was written by Ali Haji in Malay language. Besides that, if we look at the form of the writing, *The Prophet* is free from the rules of writing. It contrasts *Gurindam Dua Belas*, bound by writing rules, because *Gurindam Dua Belas* is classified as an old type of poetry.

If we look at *Gurindam Dua Belas*, it consists of two lines per stanza, the first line contains questions, problems, or agreements, and the second line includes answers or consequences. We can see an example in the first chapter.

...

Barang siapa mengenal diri

Whoever knows about himself

Maka telah mengenal akan tuhan yang bahri

than he has come to know the true of God

Barang siapa mengenal dunia

Whoever knows the world

Tahulah dia barang yang terperdaya

He knows the tricked stuff

...

Compared to Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet*, the difference in the form of writing will be seen.

“...When love beckons to you, follow him,

*Though his ways are hard and steep.
And when his wings enfold you yield to him,
Though the sword hidden among his pinions may wound you."*

(Gibran, 13/1923)

The form in *Gurindam Dua Belas* above is commonly found in old poems such as a Malay verse called pantun or other traditional verse. From the example above, we can see the sentence " *Whoever knows about himself*" as a statement, and the sentence " *than he has come to know the truth of God*" as the answer or consequence. This form continues to be repeated until the last chapter, the twelfth chapter. Also, from the first stanza, we can see the thick nuances of Sufism contained in *Gurindam Dua Belas*.

If we talk about Sufism and literature, it is pretty ironic. A Sufi who practices Sufism learns to live in *zuhd*. Trying to stay away from temporal things also does not provide any benefits and focuses on worshiping only Allah (Hanieh, 2013, p.34). But on the other hand, there are many poets and literary works that influenced by Sufism. This raises the question, is Sufism only a form of worship, or the teachings of Sufism itself have become part of the culture. Therefore, we will see from a different point of view the two literary works, one of them comes from the west with a touch of the middle east, and the other comes from southeast Asia, which south Asia influences. These two literary works will be compared by using semiotic Michael Riffaterre's theories to see the similarities and differences in the teaching of Sufism. The application of Michael Riffaterre's semiotic theory is used in this research for several reasons. Firstly, Riffaterre's semiotics are specifically

semiotics of poetry, a theory designed to uncover meaning and intent within poetic works. Even though *The Prophet* is technically a novel, it feels much more like a long poem because of the way it is written. Lastly, employing a semiotic analysis, which is aimed to examining the textual structure, is expected to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the work.

1.2. Research Questions

Based on the background above, the researcher formulates one question: How do the Sufi concepts presented in Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet* and Raja Ali Haji's *Gurindam Dua Belas* compare?

1.3. Objective of Study

This paper aims to figure out the meaning of Sufism and to explain how Sufism is figured in Kahlil Gibran the Prophet and Raja Ali Haji *Gurindam Dua Belas*, both the similarities and the differences.

1.4. Significance of Study

The purpose of this study is to find out more about how the practice of Sufism is portrayed in literature. In addition, this research is expected to provide an overview of the application of the Semiotic theory developed by Michael Riffaterre.

1.5 Literature Review

Both *The Prophet* and *Gurindam Dua Belas* can be considered relatively old literary works. While both maintain their own readership, research involving

these texts remains limited. Nonetheless, this study draws upon previous research that utilizes similar objects of study or theoretical frameworks. These include:

First, there is research conducted by Rezaldi Muhammad Pamungkas from UIN Raden Intan in 2019 with the title *Perbandingan Nilai-Nilai Teologi Dalam Prosa Sang Nabi Karya Kahlil Gibran Dan Novel Ayat-Ayat Cinta Karya Habiburahman El-Shirazy*". This research utilizes Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet* and Habiburahman El-Shirazy's novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta (Verses of Love)* as its objects of study. The research aims to explore the theological values within both novels by employing descriptive and hermeneutic methodologies, culminating in drawn conclusions. The findings of this research indicate that both *The Prophet* and *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* contain theological content. However, they differ in the philosophical approaches of the two authors, who come from distinct cultural and temporal backgrounds.

Also, the research from UIN Sunan Kalijaga is by Khairunisa in 2022. This research is entitled "*Comparing Rumi and Shakespear: Semiotic analysis of love Expression*". This study focuses on comparing the concept of love contained in both literary works using Michael Riffaterre's semiotic theory of poetry. This research found that both poems use metaphor as their primary figurative language, although in different types.

The third research is titled "Female Figures in the Poem 'Asyhadu a la imra'ata illa 'anti' (I bear witness that there is no woman but you). By Lailiyatur Rohmah from UIN Sunan Kalijaga in 2021. This study also employs Michael

Riffaterre's theories and focuses on the poet's perspective on female relationships. The research concludes by highlighting the complexity of the female figures, who, while portrayed as pro-feminist, are not entirely free from patriarchal elements.

And the last research is from UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta by Ashari with the title "*Nilai-Nilai Akhlak Dalam Gurindam Dua Belas*" in 2024. This research focuses on the "*Gurindam Dua Belas*" as its object of study. It aims to identify the moral values embedded within this literary work by Raja Ali Haji. Employing a descriptive-analytical method, the research concludes that analyzing "*Gurindam Dua Belas*" provides a comprehensive and relevant moral guide applicable to daily life.

Several previous studies have explored the topic of Sufism, particularly within the works of Kahlil Gibran, which are widely recognized. Similar attention has been given to "*Gurindam Dua Belas*" by Raja Ali Haji. These studies used various approaches, including Michael Riffaterre's semiotic analysis and other theoretical frameworks. However, there is no research found that has directly compared the Sufi elements between two literary works. Especially using Michael Riffaterre's semiotics of poetry. This research uses four stage methodology to analyze and compare Sufi values in Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet* and Raja Ali Haji's *Gurindam Dua Belas*. The analysis begins with a close reading of both texts, utilizing heuristic and hermeneutic approaches to identify indirect expressions and uncover deeper layers of meaning. After the structural analysis is conducted, the next step is focusing on the identification of the matrix, model, variants, and hypogram within each work.

1.6. Theoretical Approach

The study of sign and sign-using behavior, known as semiotics or semiology, was defined by Ferdinand de Saussure as the study of “the life of signs within society” (Britanica,2020). Semiotics, which focuses on interpreting the meaning of a sign was initially pioneered by Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Pearce. In the twentieth century, Saussure and Pearce's theory began to be developed in various fields of study.

One of the figures who developed semiotics was Michael Riffaterre. The French man wrote a book entitled "Semiotic of Poetry" in 1978. His book discusses specifically understanding and interpreting a poem. Riffaterre says in Semiotics of Poetry that poetry is different from other texts. Poetry expresses concepts and things by indirection. Simply put, a verse says one thing and means another (1972, p.2).

1.6.1 Heuristic and Hermeneutic Reading

Riffaterre (1972. P, 5) says in his book that the first step that must be done before analyzing a text is to read the text as a whole from beginning to end. This step is known as Heuristic reading. At this step, the reader's linguistic ability will be needed to reorder the text grammatically and roughly interpret the content.

After reading the entire text and getting the first interpretation of the text to be analyzed or Heuristics, the next step is the second interpretation or decoding. According to Riffaterre (1972, P. 6), the reader works forward from start to finish;

he is reviewing, revising, and comparing backward. This process is also known as Hermeneutic.

1.6.2 matrix, models, variances

According to Riffaterre (1978, p.19), poetry is the result of a matrix transformation, which is a minimal and literal sentence, into a more complex and longer form. By knowing the matrix in a poem, it can be said that the reader already knows the theme of the poem.

Model is the first actualization of the matrix. The model forms words or sentences contained in the stanza of the poem. The model is used to represent the matrix itself. Beside the model, there is also a variant which is a further form of the model that appears in each stanza.

1.6.3 Hipogram

Riffaterre explains in his book (1978, p.22) that a text cannot be separated from other texts. Basically, a rhyme is an answer to the previous rhyme. A poem cannot be separated from the previous poem. A poet absorbs, reflects, and transforms the culture around him into his poetry. This is what is called the hipogram, according to Riffaterre.

This research is applied to all four variables in this study. The aim of the study is to go over each of the factors in their own part, one by one. After that, in order to address the research issues, each discovery made from the object is compared to one another.

1.7 Method of Research

1.7.1 Type of Research

This research uses the qualitative method of collecting and analyzing non-numerical data to understand concepts, opinions, and experiences. This method is applied to research both books and poems. The researcher finds and collects data from books, journals, and another online resources.

1.7.2 Data Source

The first object of this research is a book by Kahlil Gibran titled “The Prophet,” published in 1923. The researcher uses Kahlil Gibran's book published by alma classic in 2020. Besides that, there is also a second object which is *Gurindam 12* by Raja Ali Haji. Since the "Gurindam Dua Belas" is written in the Malay language, a translation is necessary for research purposes. Therefore, the researcher utilized the book "*Gurindam 12 = The Twelve Aphorisms*" by Aswandi Ariyoes, published by the Tanjungpinang Tourism Office in 2002. In addition, the researcher uses additional sources such as other books and poems, also journals and internet as references.

1.7.3 Data Collection Technique

The researcher used a book from Kahlil Gibran and Guridam 12 by Raja Ali Haji. Both sources are closely read and give some first interpretation. after that The Researcher organize or eliminates the data and analysis data according to Michael Rifattere Theories.

1.7.4 Data Analysis technique

Both book and poem are read carefully from beginning to ending in heuristic and hermeneutic reading. After reading and getting an idea of the text to be analyzed, the next step is to look for initial interpretations and correct grammatical errors. After that, the analysis process begins so that conclusions can be obtained.

1.8 Paper Organization

There are three chapters to this research. The introduction chapter or the first chapter contains background of study, problem statement, objective of study, significance of study, literature review, theoretical approach, method of research, and paper organization. The main discussion of the paper is written in the second chapter. Finally, the conclusion and suggestions are served in the third chapter.

CHAPTER III CONCLUSSION AND SUGGESTION

3.1 Conclusion

After conducting research on *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran and *Gurindam* Twelve by Raja Ali Haji using Michael Riffatere's semiotic theory including (1) heuristic and hermeneutic reading, (2) Indirect expression, (3) matrix, model and variant, and (4) hypogram obtained the following data.

Researchers analyzed three sub-chapters from Kahli Gibran's *The Prophet: prayer, religion, and death*. The prayer chapter concludes that prayer allows people to interact with God. Finally, no matter how hard a person prays, God is the one who understands everything and provides for people's needs. The religion chapter concludes that a person's actions will reflect his religious beliefs. It may be said that good behavior reflects good religion. Then God is present in more than just places of worship. God is there wherever we look and go. Finally, in the death chapter, it is concluded that death and life are the same entity. Death is not frightening, but rather a liberation. This chapter teaches us not to fear death.

Raja Ali Haji's *Gurindam Dua belas* contains twelve chapters which are divided into three sub-themes: religion, morals and manners, and social relations. The Religion sub-theme includes religious lessons as well as threats to those who ignore religion. Morals are grouped into four sub-themes: one's own, family, other people, and nation. The third topic is social relations, which covers how to choose the correct individual and behave accordingly. *Gurindam dua belas* gives counsel for obtaining blessing from Allah and avoiding his wrath.

Even though Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet* is not directly associated with Islam, it is apparent that Islamic Sufism influenced its creation. This is evident in his work, *The Prophet*, particularly in the parts on prayer and religion, which emphasize that religion and behavior have no separation. And in the death chapter, it is emphasized that the end of life is death. This is consistent with Sufism's objective, which is to unite humanity and their gods through *makrifat*. Meanwhile, Raja Ali Haji's *Gurindam Dua belas* have some aspects of sufism like *Syara'a*, *tariqah*, *al-Haqq*, and *ma'rifat* are clearly written in accordance with Islamic value.

3.2 Suggestion

In this research, the researcher applied Michael Riffaterre's semiotic theory to analyze the concept of Sufism in Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet* and Raja Ali Haji's *Gurindam Dua Belas*. However, there are some limitations in researchers' knowledge and data availability. The researcher also suggests the next researchers are considering Expanding the scope of analysis to include other chapters and explore additional themes related to Sufism.

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