

Article

Repetition in *The Right Path*

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Abstract: Repetition is a common and significant feature in the Theatre of the Absurd, as it serves as a form of theatrical expression. Martin Esslin initially utilised this technique in 1968 to signify nonsensical speech, a type of communication between individuals.. This important characteristic is now frequently used to identify any perceived ridiculous play that has language that could mislead many people about the issues raised. From a different perspective, a similar strategy was used in local theatre, which led to the popularity of Absurd Theatre in modern Malay drama from the 1970s to the 1980s. This paper intends to focus on Mana Sikanan's method of repetition as one of the significant techniques of Theatre of the Absurd in his works. The focus of the study is on Mana Sikana's play, *The Right Path*, a translated version of the actual play, *Mustaqima*, from 1992, during the era of Experimental Theatre. It examines the method in ways that are relevant to local political and social developments of its time. Through his experiments, he gained insight into an individual who is struggling to define himself amid Malaysia's new, reorganised society. This study's implications will highlight its significance in the evolution and history of experimental theatre in modern Malay theatre.

Keywords: Absurd theatre; experimental theatre; identity; senseless speech; repetition technique

Introduction

With the advent of change in political situations in the 1970s, many were left with doubts and uncertainties about what the future held for the country. The nation had witnessed the changes that came after the post-independence period. However, we paid less attention to how society dealt with these changes internally. However, this tumultuous period of change can still be depicted through the artistic works of many creative artists to this day. Many works produced during this period depicted various social issues that required focus. In theatre, for example, playwrights such as Mana Sikana intended to portray the confusion of the individuals in coping with the whirlwind of massive transformation through his play, *Mustaqima* or *The Right Path*. The play, in general, highlighted a confused Malay Muslim society, which then, caught up in the conflict of what is right and wrong in their new lifestyles as a result of urbanisation after the country's post-independence scenario.

Since the rise of Absurd theatre in Modern Malay theatre was popularised in 1970s, Mohd Ramli Raman (1991) did his extensive research on this particular field, however, his studies was not focussing mainly on Mana Sikana alone, but on the other three famous playwrights namely, Dinsman, Anuar Nor Arai and Johan Jaffar. The continuation of other research on a similar area by any other theatre critics has been scarce ever since. This paper intends to draw attention to Mana Sikana's appropriation of absurd techniques in his translated play, *The Right Path*, published in 1993. The playwright skilfully employs absurd theatre tactics to

shed light on the problematic issues that exist, as many local theatre scholars considered the Theatre of the Absurd, which originated from the West, to be atheistic. Mana Sikana's subtle experimentation with the repeating method has enabled him to depict men's innermost thoughts as they confront challenges and life transitions. His innovative approach to appropriating these tactics set this play apart from other traditional Western absurd plays.

Literature Review

The influence of absurd plays in Modern Malay theatre first gained popularity in modern Malay theater during the period of profound political upheaval following the May 13th tragedy. When tracing the history of the Theatre of the Absurd, it was thought to have emerged as a reaction against the literary movement in 20th-century European theatre during the post-World War II era. The existentialist emphasises the sense of pessimism that surfaced during the horrific events of the wars, which gave a significant trait to this type of theatre. Some playwrights were able to explore the limits of progress and the realities of individuals in their works, which led to the formation of this theatre. However, in Malaysia, the Theatre of the Absurd had an impact on Malay playwrights in the early 1970s when they discovered that contemporary realistic plays were no longer suitable for expressing their concerns about society at that time.

Therefore, they were seeking new alternatives as an approach to theatrical production. Krishen Jit once mentioned in *The Star*, "what distinguishes each play from the next and brings out a response from many playwrights in each generation, are the political events, which have shaped and scarred the country" (Lim, 2003). Therefore, events such as the May 13th 1969 riot became a catalyst for the restructuring of the society, especially for the Malays. Solehah Ishak, in her article "Trends of Modern Malay Theatre", states that, as a response to the riot, the government began to strengthen the Acts and new ones were introduced. The New Economic Policy was introduced as a solution to overcome the economic problems faced by the Malays. The policy, introduced on July 1, 1969, encouraged Malays to leave their *kampungs* and move to urban areas to explore working in labour-intensive industries and achieve 30% of Malay equity capital (163). According to Solehah, the change in political and social settings had indeed brought a significant shift in the Modern Malay Theatre during that period. She added that events such as May 13th resulted in a more sincere and yet serious response from the local playwrights. She further mentioned that it was a period when playwrights were more sensitive to the unavoidable changes in society. "The anger, hopelessness, turmoil and chaos prevalent in their society are reflected in the abstract plays of this decade as dramatists grope to find meaning and give direction to their shattered and splintered milieu" (170). Presumably, since then, many playwrights have taken a different approach by adapting Absurd theatre techniques as their response, insights and perspectives towards the changes occurring in society at that time. The result of the racial riot in 1969 led many to question the national identity and purpose, which affected a wide range of spheres of Malaysian life, in general.

Concerning the issue of style, the playwrights of this period experimented with new approaches in combination with realistic theatre techniques. The new approaches not only reinforced Malay culture but also gave the plays a dynamic contemporary meaning and image (Nur Nina Zuhrah, 1992). Many playwrights were inclined to experiment with the absurd theatre during this time. Themes such as the struggle within an individual self became one of the most experimented subject matters in these works. Since absurd techniques contain high allegorical overtones, it was deemed appropriate to depict the hardships of an individual seeking to find their identity and roots. As a result, the playwrights found that incorporating strong allegorical elements was an effective way to convey their insights in the plots.

A closer look at the works produced by these 1970s playwrights reveals that their works primarily focus on the subject of individual existence. Precisely, it could be postulated that the plays presented psychological dilemmas experienced by most of the characters (Nur Nina Zuhrah & Rahmah Bujang, 1988). The plays written during this period reflect the existential issues commonly represented by individuals caught in self-conflict as they seek to find meaning in life. The playwrights had successfully depicted the dilemmas and confusion in the characters portrayed in the plays. The pain and confusion further reflect the playwrights' insights and their concerns over social issues, which were relevant during that time. (Mohd. Ramli Raman, 1991). While the priority of realistic plays is to provide a realistic representation, on the other hand, absurd

plays tend to highlight conflicts within the individual self and offer insights into the reality of a despondent life.

Mana Sikana was found to experiment with the typical techniques that many other experimental playwrights had employed in this era. The standard absurd methods that were widely applied would be repetitive and nonsensical words, which are apparent in the dialogues. The experiments made by many playwrights during this period are more like an effort to produce something different in the concept of the Malay absurd. However, it is found here that the experimentations made by Mana Sikana were not widely accepted, as he received much backlash from the local theatre critics and the audience at large. This is mainly because the plays were labelled as vague and difficult to understand (Nur Nina Zuhrah, 1992). As a result, the absurd plays have created confusion among the audience, as they cannot comprehend the meaning that the playwrights intended to highlight.

The emergence of the Theatre of the Absurd during the period of Experimental Theatre is deemed an unfavourable development in Malay theatre. Since Malaysian society is still basically religious, Western influences on the absurd plays, which clash with many Islamic values, are looked upon as elements that negate the spiritual values. This phenomenon, closely related to the origins of the absurd and its epistemology, has created considerable confusion among the audience and most local theatre critics. The advent of Islamic revivalism in Malay theatre in the 1980s had effectively prevented the absurd play from sustaining its fame in the Malay theatrical arena.

In relation to this, it is found that most absurd works are not as easy as they might be perceived or even as absurd as it was once labelled. The plays are indeed abstract and philosophical. Mohd. Ramli Raman mentions that in tandem with some sociological issues raised by the playwrights, the characters presented in the absurd plays are searching for a man's dignity in mundane life (1991). The ridiculous level in these works reveals the soul's journey of finding meaning in life. He suggests that these absurd plays are, by nature, very existentialistic and offers the audience a different metaphysical perspective. Mohd. Ramli Raman indicates that absurd plays solely highlight the tumult of the internal conflicts experienced by humans in finding the authenticity of life (Mohd. Ramli Raman, 1991). His notion seems to conform with the earlier findings by Abdul Rahman Napiah or Mana Sikana (1983) in his book, *Esei dan Kritikan Drama*, that most absurd plays written during the period of experimental theatre can be categorised as 'metadrama' or metaphysical drama.

The majority of works that appeared during the Experimental Theatre era in the 1970s demonstrated a solid foundation in elements of absurd theatre. However, it is found that a few playwrights, according to Rahmah Bujang and Nur Nina Zuhrah (1988), sought to explore the existential and psychological struggles of the individual, or even attempt to address regional issues on a global scale. The playwrights are more focused on their responsibilities to raise the issues at hand and "*thus made the works to be socially oriented*" (144). Mana Sikana was well-known for his experiments within the absurd framework and hence successfully bringing local issues to the attention at the universal level. Regretfully, not much attention has been paid to his work and inventiveness. Conversely, throughout its brief existence on the local theatre scene, the absurd theatre has been the target of a great deal of criticism in the local literary scene.

Methodology

This study will examine how the playwright, Mana Sikana, applied repetition as a technique in his work. Repetition is a technique introduced in the works of Theatre of the Absurd, becoming a prominent feature in all plays within this category. First, this paper will give an overview of the definition and the origins of this form. The discussion will continue with a highlight of how the playwright, Mana Sikana, employed that technique in *The Right Path*, which further illustrates his explicit experimentation with absurd theatre. The findings will be presented to indicate the form that was experimented with in this play, thus demonstrating the significance of repetition as a technique in an absurd play that was once popular in the period of Experimental Theatre in Malaysia.

1. Repetition Technique in Theatre of the Absurd

According to Esslin (1968), many traditional Western theatre forms were upended by the emergence of the absurd theatre. Hence, they found, developed, and used new appropriate methods instead. Due to its roots in the avant-garde artistic experimentation of the 1920s and 1930s, as well as the profound impact of the Second World War, absurd theatre may have required the use of various techniques to bring its subjects to the stage. Consequently, the methods mirror the fragility of human existence and its underlying meaninglessness. Clowning and crazy moments are common in the theatre of the absurd, as life is often perceived as confusing. Nothing can make it meaningful because everything in life has lost its purpose. The characters in the Theatre of the Absurd depict this chaos and bewilderment by babbling among themselves. From the standpoint of absurdity, language is seen as a pointless tool for communication and life is viewed as meaningless.

It is highlighted that the Theatre of the Absurd's emphasis on fanciful narratives and verbally meaningless vocabulary are its key characteristic. Esslin (1968) further emphasised that, on the plot level, the Theatre of the Absurd's storyline is completely unstructured. In her article "*Tahap Drama Kontemporari – Abstrak atau Absurd*," Solehah Ishak (1986) stated that absurd plays have a circular structure, meaning they end the same way they began. In other words, there will be no conflicts between or resolutions of the disputes (66). Characters are frequently incomplete and have no proper characterisations. They are portrayed as waiting puppets, and their wait is always seen as meaningless and unending. Verbal nonsense language is another crucial component of absurd tactics, according to Esslin (1968).

In contrast to other types of theatre, absurd theatre aims to dismantle the conventionalised and stereotyped uses of language. The Theatre of the Absurd highlights how words are unable to convey the core of human experience, which prevents them from penetrating the surface. Themes such as incongruity, senseless logic, discontinuity, senseless repetition, identity loss, conformity, hopelessness, despair, and futility are some of the unique elements that George R. Kernodle (1937) noted are often involved in the Theatre of the Absurd to a certain level (310–311). Therefore, it is evident that one of the key components that sets an absurd play apart from others is the language application in the play.

In *The Right Path*, it is argued that the playwright had applied language incongruity in the usage of repetitive words and phrases throughout the play. The repetition of words and phrases further reflects the sense of void and meaninglessness experienced by the main characters. It also demonstrates the element of 'pure' abstraction in Absurd Theatre, illustrating the emptiness in human communication. Esslin (1968) added that since Absurd Theatre assumes an anti-literary attitude, language is no longer an instrument for the expression of the deepest level of meanings (319). The language employed draws the audience into the depths of a metaphysical journey, and the conflicts within tend to convey more than any language can express. Thus, the language in these plays is dislocated and full of clichés and repetitions.

Many reviewers tend to associate the language experimented with in the absurd play with a resemblance to regular speech. Repetition is a key component of both everyday speech and significant theatrical discourse in the Theatre of the Absurd. A common stylistic element in absurd plays is repetition, a technique also employed by local experimental playwrights such as Mana Sikana. According to Schnebly (1993), repetition conveys conflict between the characters in addition to providing meaning and encouraging interaction. This is merely because repetition can be used to avoid giving relevant answers, to control other characters verbally, and to demonstrate artificial engagement. Furthermore, repetition can establish harmony by making us laugh, connecting with the repetition of our regular speech to create conversation that seems comfortable, and emotionally engrossing us in the melodic patterns of the discourse. Nevertheless, excessive repetition or noise can also lead to discord and confusion. Repetition demonstrates that the communication systems in general between characters are in a state of collapse.

For this study, the focus method would be on highlighting the repetition techniques applied by Mana Sikana in his work, *The Right Path*. The playwright prefers to repeat only selected phrases in his work that are relatable in this study. Schnebly's (1993) findings tend to be very relevant here, especially when one tries to scrutinise Mana Sikana's play, *The Right Path*, which reflects the application of repetitive words, phrases and even nonsensical dialogues that contribute to the portrayal of issues that are otherwise difficult to discuss publicly. Not only that, the colloquial language used is easily understood; thus, the audience can grasp and

appreciate the further delicate issues that the playwrights raised. The language that should be familiar tends to mimic the repetitive nature of ordinary talk, such as dialogues, which can seem comfortable but also feel threatening and unsettle the audience or readers because it captures the ambivalence in our communication process. The discussion would also examine the significance of repetitive methods employed by the playwright in the situation from a realistic standpoint, through the lens of Islamic discourse. This is the major highlight of this paper, as the repetition is not only a technique that the playwright adopted, but also, as the title of this play, *The Right Path/Mustaqima*, suggests, there is a need to explicate his thoughts from a religious perspective.

2. Mana Sikana's Experimentation on Theatre of the Absurd

Mana Sikana, whose real name is Abdul Rahman Napiah, is widely known as a theatre critic and scholar. Though he has written numerous plays, he remained unnoticed as a playwright. His play, *The Right Path*, which was translated and published in 1992 by Solehah Ishak, is an interesting play that reflects a strong fundamental of the philosophy of existentialism and absurd techniques. In this play, Mana Sikana tries to depict Nietzsche's famous play, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, with his very own adaptation. On the contrary, *The Right Path* addresses the issue of God, which is pertinent from an Islamic perspective. *The Right Path* reveals a world that can lead people to forget and stray from their religious beliefs. The production of *The Right Path* has brought justice to Mana Sikana's reputation as a dramatist. His other plays, such as *Amulet and Kill*, have been dismissed by Zakaria Ariffin and Dinsman as "playing with words" and remain on the fringes of the Malay theatre scene. Solehah added that these two theatre critics have pointed out that the plays written by Mana Sikana have often been ignored (1993).

In an interview conducted by the author in 2009, Mana Sikana admitted to being influenced by Western absurd theatre. He conducted extensive reading on Esslin's famous work on absurd theatre and the philosophy of existentialism. Mana Sikana had perceived that absurd theatre was a discovery of new realities, and the emergence of the theatre of the absurd was a reflection of the cultural and spiritual condition of the West. However, within his spirituality, as expressed through this play, *The Right Path* had a close connection to the Malay world. He attempted to explore these spiritual discoveries through the lens of being a Malay Muslim, and hence, the creative adaptations of absurd plays emerged. Being a Malay Muslim himself, his worldview tends to be closely associated with Islam. Therefore, his play was free from any sense of meaninglessness and the enlightenment of the death of God. Consequently, it could be postulated that Mana Sikana's play did offer "hope within hopelessness" since meaninglessness never existed in Islamic fundamental belief.

Discussion

The Right Path is an adaptation of two famous existential works: Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus* and Nietzsche's famous novel, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In this play, Mana Sikana has adapted the characters of Sisyphus and Zarathustra to feature in his work. He has adopted them into his own Malay version of Sisyphus and Zurastura, giving them slightly different characterisations to suit his play. Not only that, but some additional characters also contribute to building this distinctive plot. What makes this play uniquely Mana Sikana's own is how he blends his perspective with the ideology that helps to make this play socially-oriented to the local audience, specifically the Malay Muslims. This is simply because the play incorporates some Islamic perspectives and insights, perhaps as a didactic approach to conveying a Muslim's faith and values.

The first thing that makes this play an absurd or experimental play is the uniquely absurd language, which happens to be verbally nonsensical. All the characters are uttering dialogues that are incongruent and lack sense. Through the dialogues, it is evident that the characters portray their hopelessness and despair regarding the issues at hand. The main character, Sisipus is depicted to be devoted to God by rolling a boulder to the top of the mountain. However, his action is perceived as meaningless, especially by the devil who acts as Zurastura. Zurastura continues to disturb Sisipus from continuing his devotion towards God the Almighty. The presence of Princess in the plot creates a diversion for Sisipus from being devoted to the task that he needs to fulfil. It can be seen in the dialogue,

Princess: Go away! You're really filthy and dangerous! Don't bother other people's affairs. **Stupid!**
 Zurastura: *(He begins to irritate him.)* **Stupid.**
 Sisipus: Who is **stupid**?
 Zurastura: What I mean is, eh, eh, what I mean is you're **stupid!**
 Sisipus: Repeat that word!
 Zurastura: I mean, hmm, he.. he, I mean, I'm **stupid!**

(Sisipus and Princess burst out laughing. Zurastura, embarrassed, leaves. Sisipus and Princess indulge in their romance.)

(The Right Path 1992: 132-133).

From arguing with one another on the issue of being faithful to God, they engaged in a dialogue that is nonsensical and incongruent with the argument that they had earlier. The word 'stupid' is being repeated several times, which indicates that they are engaged in a silly activity that neither of them can admit. It sounds funny when Zurastura suddenly reveals that he is stupid, and he finally laughs cynically at the term 'stupid' because to him, he knows to whom the word is referring. He knows that he has successfully lured Sisipus away from his total devotion to God, and Sisipus is then busy with the new distraction. Zurastura left with embarrassment after losing the argument with Sisipus, and it might also indicate that he feels embarrassed to stay longer and witness the two lovebirds indulge in their romance.

The above lines represent the usage of a vulgar word that is stupid. The word was repeatedly applied in the dialogue above, and it is perceived as uncalled for. When the Princess called someone stupid, and others started to do the same to Sisipus, he too began to use the same derogatory term to show his disdain for the Princess's attitude. Here, the vulgar word is not only to present a ludicrous moment in the play, but it also reflects Sisipus as a religious man, supposed to be patient in dealing with people who were arrogant and misbehaved. As someone who intends to preach to others to do good, the person needs to be patient in dealing with misbehaviours and be gentle when teaching them the right paths (Ahmad et al., 2023).

The dialogue, too, indicates a form of criticism for people who think they know better. Unfortunately, they still did not realise that they did not fully understand what they had practised. This is a reflection of what is to be labelled as *Taqlid* among the believers of Islam. *Taqliq* is a concept that refers to the unquestioning acceptance of the legal decisions or actions of another without knowing the basis of those decisions or instructions. There is a wide range of opinion about *taqlīd* among different groups or schools of Muslims. While various religious sects are still debating this, many Muslims are not aware that they have fallen into this belief, fearing that questioning everything would lead them to become non-believers. This is not strictly in line with proper Islamic teachings, as Islam encourages discussions as part of the learning process for a deeper understanding of Islamic knowledge. In the end, Mana Sikana symbolically made fun of their 'holier than thou' attitude, in which what they performed to God was all meaningless, and every character highlighted in the play is all the same; they sinned and were ignorant.

Mana Sikana has created a repetitive pattern in his dialogue that makes the audience laugh. This parallels Schnebly's (1993) earlier mention that, despite repetitive language representing a breakdown of language and communication, it can still create emotional involvement through bonding with the repetition of our everyday speech, which produces dialogue that makes us laugh. The play is an abstract work that addresses serious issues. Whilst the playwright intelligently inserts some funny elements in between the portrayal of the characters and their dialogues, the audience is aware that it is far from being funny after all. Another example to show this creative experiment,

(Princess closes her eyes. Sisipus approaches her stealthily like a thief. He hesitates. But the Princess insists. Sisipus kisses. And suddenly Pak Wah, followed by WIFE I and WIFE II, come in.

Pak Wah: *(Shouts angrily).*
 Here is forbidden to kiss.
(Sisipus and Princess are shocked, they are almost frightened).

- Pak Wah: This is a sacred place. It is here that Prophet Abraham was born, here that Prophet Joseph died, here that war broke out between Abel and Cain.
- Princess: We didn't do anything.
- Sisipus : **Yes, we were only joking!**
- Pak Wah: **It is forbidden to joke here! Yes, but with my own eyes,** I saw that both of you have committed 'khalwat', which is close proximity.
- Sisipus: **Oh, we were just playing.**
- Pak Wah: You will be both be taken to court and if found guilty, will be **sentenced to starve until you die.**
- Sisipus: **Ohh gosh! Ohh, I'm so hungry!**
- Pak Wah: **That means you're already guilty.**
- Princess: Please forgive us, **sir.**
- Pak Wah: Don't call me "**sir**". My name is Pak Wah.

(*The Right Path* 1992:136).

It is interesting to note that this couple are shocked and starts to make peculiar excuses to defend their actions. Since they are both Muslims and unmarried, what they are doing is wrong. Notice the incongruent sense of logic in this specific dialogue. Sisipus sheepishly tries to defend himself, and in the middle of the confrontation with Pak Wah, he suddenly feels hungry. His hunger has made a loud noise, and according to Pak Wah, since he feels hungry, Sisipus is proven guilty. It does not make sense at all that if one feels hungry, they are considered guilty. After all, it does make the audience or readers feel funny and burst into laughter. Despite knowing and being fully aware of the law, some people tend to bend the law to ensure they get away with it. Religion has become a convenience to those who manipulate it to make it fit their agenda.

Despite the philosophical adaptations, *The Right Path* is indeed an enjoyable play with its comical scenes and characters. There are many instances where scenes are not congruent with the characters and plots; yet, this play is a fun experience to watch or read. Mana Sikana has raised several religious issues in this play, including faith in God, the validity of the Holy Book, and the concept of *taqlid*, which many Muslims are often ignorant about. Nonetheless, the portrayal of comical features has transformed this play, making it a somewhat sarcastic and humorous work at the same time. Comical scenes, phrases, and statements from characters initially served as a reminder for the Malay Muslim audience, specifically. When the funny remarks sounded like typical jokes, they also conveyed a deeper notion of the reality of what is happening among many, which remains prevalent to this day.

The play focuses on the main character, Sisipus, who portrays a man who is confused in making choices. He is drifting away from his intention to be entirely devoted to God, or he wants to pursue his life in a more typical way, like other people. This can be seen in the play when the devil, who acts as Zurastura, lures Sisipus to enjoy life's pleasures and offers women and alcohol to make Sisipus forget God. In the beginning, Zurastura fails, and later, Sisipus finds out that all the temptations are hard to resist. In this play, I will examine how the playwright navigates the complexities of choosing between being a good servant to God and striving to be a simple human being, leading a simple life. While leading a simple life, like anybody, there is always a devil in disguise, known as Zurastura, who betrays him from achieving his mission. This enjoyable yet straightforward play will pique the interest of anyone seeking to explore the philosophy of the absurd and existentialism, which work together in a unique blending of Islamic perspectives that seems impossible to reconcile. However, this play has proven significant in presenting the psychological dilemmas in which the typical realistic approach has indicated its limitations. Henceforth, playwrights in this era opted to experiment with absurd theatre techniques, as they were deemed suitable alternatives in the Modern Malay Theatre industry at that time.

Conclusion

Since the playwright unravels the subject of human psyche from the perspective of the Islamic worldview, Mana Sikana, in a past interview in 2009, did admit that his readings in Islamic philosophy had shaped their works to deal with the conflicts of the absurd from the Western school of thought, but strictly within the boundaries of Islamic principles. He grounded his discussions in Islamic philosophy, which dealt heavily with relevant existentialist discourse in their works, providing different perspectives as alternatives to the solutions to the subject raised. Mana Sikana in *The Right Path* aimed to guide the confused society towards religious paths, enabling them to lead happy and blessed lives. He strongly felt that, following the May 13th incident and the changes in many government policies, society was in a state of confusion, grappling to find its true identity. Hence, in this play, he sought to return society to its roots and for religion to find the meaning of their lives. It could also be noted that the playwright suggests returning to the true teachings of Islam to navigate the current global challenges we face today. Evidently, there are too many mainstream thoughts and philosophies from the West that could create confusion for the current generation of Muslims in this country, for example, pluralism, secularism and liberalism (Mohd. Hidayat Mahadi, et.al, 2025). Indeed, this play contains heavy trappings of philosophical questions. Therefore, the playwright included some comical and ludicrous scenes to give the audience relief and distraction, allowing them to enjoy the play more towards the end. Therefore, the playwright included some comical and ludicrous scenes to provide the audience with relief and distraction, allowing them to enjoy the play more towards the end.

Mana Sikana attests to his creativity as a playwright and is more than just a representation of an unparalleled work of art that defies conventional styles and techniques. Coming from a playwright who wrote during that era, his work is well-written and unique. Through the characters in the play, he portrays doubts and confusion over the matter of self-existence and faith in God. He cleverly highlights these issues with satirical remarks and criticisms. Examining the play, it is evident that it would be impossible to deal with metaphysical issues using realistic theatre techniques only. However, repetitive methods are more than capable of depicting confusion and the entrapment of the mind, body, and soul through characters who are caught up in a muddled worldview; a result of modernisation, as they search for the true meaning of submission to God the Almighty.

Repetition as a pattern applied by the playwright in this play works as a soft reminder to those who are related, and in this case, would be the Malay Muslims in general. Repetitive words and phrases, which have brought some comical and clowning effects to the audience, functioned well in initially highlighting the playwright's concerns. The issues highlighted are sensitive and highly controversial. However, with the application of absurd techniques, the problems are eloquently well presented, and it still functions within the parameters of Islamic principles of faith. This is important to note as it indicates the play's point of departure from the typical Western absurd plays. Thus denoting the significance of the playwright's appropriation of technique to produce a play that is uniquely his own.

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