

**THE LEGEND OF DATUK MARSAM;
THE TURMERIC GRASSHOPPER**
Legenda Datuk Marsam Sang Belalang Kunyit

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**THE LEGEND OF DATUK MARSAM;
THE TURMERIC GRASSHOPPER**

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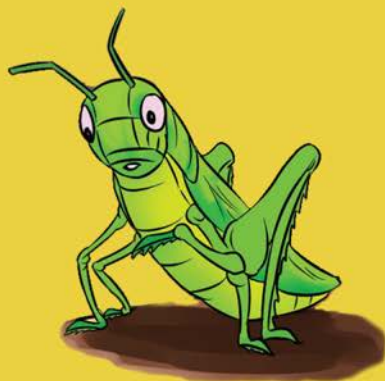
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Legenda Datuk Marsam Sang Belalang Kunyit

Cerita Rakyat dari Jambi



Ditulis oleh

Muhammad Ikhsan

LEGENDA DATUK MARSAM SANG BELALANG KUNYIT

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1. KESUSASTRAAN RAKYAT-SUMATERA
2. CERITA RAKYAT- JAMBI

Foreword

Literature work is not only series of word but it also talks about life, both realistically and idealistically of human. If it is realistic, the literature work usually contains life experiences, good model, and wisdom which have been added various style and imagination along with it. Meanwhile, if it idealistic, the literature work contains moral lecture, good character, advices, philosophical symbols, culture and other things related to human life. The life itself is very diverse, varies, and full of various problems and conflicts faced by humans. The diversity in humans life also affects to the diversity of literature work because the contents are inseparable from civilized and dignified humans life.

The literature works that dealing with life utilizes language as medium of deliverance and imaginative art as its *cultural land*. On the basis of the language medium and imaginative art, literature is multidimensional and multi-interpretative. Using language medium, imginative art and cultural dimension, literature deliver messages to be reviewed or analyzed from various perspectives. The outcome of that perspective depends greatly on who is reviewing and analyzing with various socio-cultural and knowledge background. There is a time when a literary reviewer reviews from the point of view of metaphor, myth, symbol, power, ideology, economy, politics, and culture can be refuted by other reviewers who see from perspective of sound, referent, or irony. Even so, Heraclitus said, "However opposite they work together and from different directions, the most beautiful harmony emerges".

There are many lessons that we can get from reading literature, one of which is reading folktales that are adapted or reprocessed into children's stories. The results of reading literature always inspire and motivate readers to be creative in finding something new. Reading literature can trigger further imagination, open enlightenment, and add insights. For this

reason, we express our gratitude for the processors for the story. We also express our appreciation and gratitude to the Head of the Coaching Center, Head of the Learning Division, and Head of the Subdivision of Modules and Teaching Materials and staffs for all the efforts and hard works carried out until the realization of this book.

Hopefully this storybook is not only useful as a reading material for students and the community to foster a culture of literacy through the National Literacy Movement program, but also useful as an enrichment of our knowledge of past life that can be utilized in addressing current and future life developments.

Jakarta, June 2016

Regards,
Prof. Dr. Dadang Sunendar, M. Hum.

Preface

The Legend of Datuk Marsam; The Turmeric Grasshopper is one of the folklore originating from Kembang Paseban Village, Mersam District, Batanghari Regency, Jambi Province. The writing of this story originated from a story called Belalang Kunyit by Dedy Syaputra, which is one of the texts in the Jambi Folk Story Writing Competition held by the Jambi Provincial Language Office in 2015.

The educational element contained in the story Datuk Marsam Sang Grasshopper Turmeric is related to human attitudes and behavior which is illustrated through the character Datuk Marsam. Even though he was a leader, he had never been arrogant, haughty, and acted arbitrarily. Datuk Marsam always deliberates in dealing with all issues in order to value and respect the opinions of the people. In addition, he was a leader who was willing to sacrifice for the benefit of many people.

The Legend of Datuk Marsam; The Turmeric Grasshopper is a legendary story. In the past, this story was told by parents to put their children to sleep. Until now this story is still believed by most people in the Mersam area.

Hopefully, this story can benefit children who read it and can add insight into the diversity of cultures and customs that the Indonesian people have.

Muhammad Ikhsan

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THE LEGEND OF DATUK MARSAM; THE TURMERIC GRASSHOPPER

Once upon a time, at the banks of Batanghari River (located in what became Mersam Sub-District, Batanghari Regency nowadays), there was a village called Paseban. It was one of the villages with strong Melayu Jambi culture. Paseban was a prosperous and peaceful village. It was rich with natural resources, particularly from fishing and farming. The people lived harmoniously, always respecting each other.

Part of the reason why Paseban Village prospered was because the people always worked together and helped each other. The people of Paseban Village had strong solidarity.

Paseban Village was led by a man called Datuk Marsam. He was a charismatic leader that all villagers respected him. In addition, the people loved Datuk Marsam because he was a wise, fair, and just leader. Every social matter in Paseban Village was solved through discussions. Datuk Marsam was also known as a friendly man. He was always polite when speaking and he possessed great skills with words. Among the long-lived traditions of Melayu Jambi culture were *pantun* (limericks) and *seloka* (poems) and Datuk Marsam was an expert at both. At the time, a leader of any social group was obligated to master the tradition of creating *pantun* and *seloka*.



One day, an outbreak of *nyampu bujang*, an illness that attacked young people with high fever, hit Paseban Village. Nobody knew where it came from and how it spread. All they knew was that young people in the village suddenly fell ill with fever. The villagers had tried anything and everything to cure their family member from the disease.

However, both traditional medicine and spiritual healing yielded no result. Most of the people finally gave up and let Datuk Marsam, their leader, to settle the matter.

“Oh, Datuk Marsam, please forgive us if we intrude upon you. We have a problem we need your help with,” one of the villagers said.

“What is it? What made you come here in droves?” Datuk Marsam asked.

“Well, probably you have heard about the outbreak in our village, Datuk?”

“The outbreak of *nyampu bujang*? Yes, I have heard of it.”

“Well, we have tried a lot of things to cure our family members from the disease. However, none of us has succeeded. We don’t know what else to do. You are our only hope, Datuk, our last hope. For your information, there are many young men who are currently unable to work their fields. If you go to the river, there

are only a few young men fishing there. This is a serious problem, Datuk. What should we do, Datuk?”

Hearing that there were a lot of his people suffering from the disease, Datuk Marsam was worried. The disease had almost crippled his village, and if it was not handled soon, there would surely be dire consequences. Therefore, he invited all villagers to discuss the matter in his house.

“I have heard of this problem and I have thought about it. As a leader, I share the burden of responsibility to solve this problem,” Datuk Marsam told them.

“What should we do, Datuk?” another villager asked.

“I cannot make a decision alone. We have to gather our heads to find a solution. So, please tell all villagers to come to my house next Thursday evening,” Datuk Marsam concluded.

“Very well, Datuk. Thank you very much. We’re sorry to have bothered you, Datuk.”

“Don’t mention it.”

The villagers then go home. Meanwhile, Datuk Marsam retired to his room.

Thursday evening arrived. Datuk Marsam and the whole Paseban Village gathered in a *loteng* (a kind of stage where people sat together for a discussion) in front of his house. The villagers came one by one. Some brought their children with them. There was even a woman with her little baby.

Before starting the discussion, Datuk Marsam paced back and forth, coming in and out of *loteng*. He seemed worried, as if he was desperately waiting for someone.

The whole village had come, but Datuk Marsam still had not begun their meetings. The people who had been there since Magrib began to feel restless.

“Excuse me, Datuk. Who are we waiting for?” one of the villagers asked.

Datuk Marsam did not reply. He kept staring at the road in front of his house.

“It’s getting late, Datuk. Shouldn’t we start the meeting?” another villager suggested.

Datuk Marsam turned around and looked at the people. He knew that they all expected much from him. As a leader, he had to make a decision soon.

“Very well,” Datuk Marsam said, “let’s started.”

Datuk Marsam began the meeting with a short *seloka*.

“*Kalaulah aek sudah tatumpah, eloklah diisi lagi. Kalaulah tumbuh alang di laman, hendaklah kito tebas* (When the water spilled, we’d better refill the pot. When the weeds grow tall in the yard, we’d better cut them short).”

All the villagers were quiet, musing the meaning of that *seloka*. None of them said anything and all eyes were on Datuk Marsam. Datuk Marsam then continued with a *pantun*.

“*Bedaro masak jatuh di tepi, jatuh memantul wajan yang keno, perkaro besak sedang dihadapi, mohonlah usul yang bijaksano* (A ripe Bidara falls on the ground, it hit a wok and bounced around; The problem we’re facing is a huge one, it’d be good to have wise suggestions).”

The silence was so thick. Only the crickets were heard. A few moments later, Datuk Marsam began their discussion.

“First, I’d like to thank all of you to come here. I thank all villagers, educated men, and *tuo tengganai* (respected elders in Melayu Jambi culture) among us this evening. I invite you all to discuss a serious matter that our village is facing. As of today, most of young men in our village are suffering from *nyampu bujang* and we have no idea where it came from and how it spread.”

Everyone listened intently. No one dared to cut Datuk Marsam's opening speech.

“As a leader, I bear the responsibility to solve this problem. However, it is beyond my capability. I cannot decide on this matter by myself.

Therefore, I'd like to hear your opinions and suggestions to decide what we should do regarding this problem,” Datuk Marsam continued with a serious expression on his face.

Just as Datuk Marsam said that, a sound of shuffling steps approached the *loteng*. Datuk Marsam put the discussion on hold. Everyone turned to see who was coming. At the door, stood a man they all knew. He was a fortune teller called Datuk Sengkati. Not only was he a fortune teller, Datuk Sengkati was also a cultural leader in the area. He often offered advice and suggestion to Datuk Marsam regarding serious problems.

“Welcome, Datuk Sengkati. We apologize to have started without waiting for you,” Datuk Marsam welcomed the man he had been expecting.

“That's fine. Carry on,” Datuk Sengkati said. He then took a seat beside Datuk Marsam.

“Datuk surely have heard what is happening in our village. What do you think, Datuk? What should we do? I'm really looking

forward to your suggestions,” Datuk Marsam addressed Datuk Sengkati.

Datuk Sengkati shifted on his seat before speaking.

“Well, Datuk Marsam. I think this is quite a huge problem. I have wanted to talk about this with you. Since everyone has gathered here, I think it’s fine if they all know the true nature of this outbreak.”

Datuk Marsam and the villagers looked at Datuk Sengkati with high expectation. Meanwhile, Datuk Sengkati tried to calm himself and formulate the words so that he could inform the people in the best manner.

“Our village is currently facing an extraordinary ordeal. Way over there, there is someone who is jealous with prosperity of Paseban Village. This person has been trying to get to us for a long time. He is a shaman who lives in a faraway village,” Datuk Sengkati explained. His eyes were looking at something faraway.

When they heard what was actually happening, all the people, including Datuk Marsam, were startled. The meeting was bustling with voices. Everyone talked at the same time. Datuk Marsam tried to think if he had any enemy who might hold a grudge and wanted to settle the score. However, he could not think of anyone. Besides, Paseban Village had great relationship with its surrounding villages.

“Order! Order!” Datuk Marsam called, holding out his hands to calm the people down.

“Then, what should we do, Datuk?” Datuk Marsam asked. His forehead creased with a frown.

“Do any of you have any suggestion?” Datuk Sengkati said.

The people looked at each other. They began to talk all at once again.

“Excuse me, Datuk. May I speak? Our village has been peaceful all this time. Even if someone fell ill, it would be a common disease and could be easily cured. However, it’s not the case this time. There must be someone behind all this,” one of the villagers said seriously.

“There might be someone from this village who met this shaman and offended him. And as a payback, he sent the disease to our village,” he added.

“Yes, I can imagine that. But what’s more important is to find a solution. Do you have any suggestion?”

“Yes, Datuk. What if Datuk Marsam and Datuk Sengkati set out to find the shaman and take him down?” the man suggested.

Datuk Marsam nodded. He looked around and said, “That’s a good idea. Anyone else?”

The others then gave their opinions and suggestions. Some of them suggested that Datuk Marsam sent people to track the shaman and brought him to the village for a trial. Others suggested that Datuk Sangkuti should be the one looking for the shaman. There were several other suggestions thrown in the air. After listening to everyone and their suggestions, Datuk Marsam conferred with Datuk Sangkuti and made a decision.

“I thank you for all your suggestions. As the leader of Paseban Village, I have to decide on something. I want our village to be free from this awful outbreak. One thing that I can conclude from our discussion is that the shaman should be found. I decided that Datuk Sengkati and I will go to find and meet him. Even though there are certainly some risks, I believe it’s the best thing to do for our village,” Datuk Marsam announced his decision.

“If I may, Datuk,” Datuk Sengkati stopped Datuk Marsam because he had something to say, “the shaman lives very far from here. If it’s only the two of us, old men, I think the risk is too great.”

“What do you suggest, Datuk?” Datuk Marsam asked.

“I think it would be better if we take three men from the village with us. These men should be chosen carefully. They should have strengths that would be useful in our trip,” Datuk Sangkuti explained.

“I agree. We’ll set out tomorrow,” Datuk Marsam decided.

Hearing that decision, everyone in the *loteng* looked at each other. From behind, a man was half standing and asking permission to speak.

“Datuk, may I say something?” he asked, putting his right hand on his left chest.

“Yes, you may. What are you going to say?” Datuk Marsam said.

“Thank you, Datuk. After hearing your decision, I can say that we are relieved. We are sure that Datuk made the decision for our own good, isn’t that so?” He asked the people.

“Yes, it’s true,” the people replied in unison.

“Then?”

“Well, Datuk have just said that you and Datuk Sengkati will go to find the shaman. You also said that you will bring three men from the village to accompany you. My question is, have you decided on the men you will bring with you?” he asked.

Datuk Marsam exchanged glances with Datuk Sengkati.

“Thank you. That’s a good question. Well, ladies and gentlemen, I know that all of you are willing to come with us to defend our village. But I think it would be better if I picked the men myself. I

assure you that they are not common people. We will choose men with extraordinary courage and superb martial art skills. Most importantly, they have to have permission from their parents. Do you agree with my criteria?" Datuk Marsam asked.

"We agree, Datuk," the people replied.

"Now, it is late. It is time we end this meeting. We are dismissed," Datuk Marsam concluded the meeting.

The people left the place one by one and returned home.

"Datuk Sengkati, thank you very much for coming. I will see you tomorrow," Datuk Marsam said, embracing Datuk Sengkati.

"It's my pleasure, Datuk Marsam. Let's hope that we can deal with this outbreak soon. You are the only hope these people have, Datuk," Datuk Sengkati said. He then returned to his house too. When Datuk Sengkati was no longer visible in the dark, Datuk Marsam went in his house.

The following morning, Datuk Sengkati reported that he had found the exact location of the shaman through his meditation the previous night. Datuk Marsam and Datuk Sengkati, accompanied by three handpicked men, were ready to go. Their quest would not be easy because they had to go a long way and would find a lot of obstacles before they could find the shaman.



The whole village said farewell to them. A few people were crying because they were afraid that Datuk Marsam dan Datuk Sengkati would not return.

“We’re leaving. Please pray for our safe return,” Datuk Marsam said to the people.

“Yes, Datuk. We hope you succeed finding the shaman and bring him here. Good luck Datuk,” a *Tuo Tenganai* said.

Datuk Marsam and his companions then left Paseban Village. The three men often turned around and waved goodbye to their families and friends.

Based on the direction that Datuk Sengkati got in his meditation, the shaman they were looking for lived in Teluk Kualı Village. To get to the village, they had to walk for two days. Datuk Marsam was not daunted. He wanted to stop the outbreak as soon as possible.

During their trip, they experience a lot of strange things. On the first day, when they arrived in a dense forest, they were attacked by animals in the forest. However, it was not just the wild animals like tigers and snakes that attacked them.

Even animals that were usually tame and not dangerous, such as rabbits, deers, monkeys, and birds, came after them.

Thanks to the three men's skills, they managed to get out of the forest alive. Their martial arts had saved the group from the animals.

“Are you alright, Datuk?” one of the men asked Datuk Sengkati when they had gotten out of the forest.

“Yes, I am alright,” Datuk Sengkati said, brushing the dust and dirt from his clothes.

“What about you, Datuk Marsam, are you alright?”

“Yes, I'm fine,” Datuk Marsam replied.

“I hope that was just a coincidence,” the tall man said.

The three men then helped Datuk Marsam and Datuk Sengkati picking up their provisions that were scattered on the ground.

“We're lucky to be able to defeat those animals. I hope there's no more surprise ahead of us,” Datuk Marsam said to Datuk Sengkati.

“I agree, Datuk. We're fortunate because you have selected the right men. They are totally dependable,” Datuk Sengkati responded, watching the three men.

“Well, it’s almost dark, Datuk. What do you say if we rest here tonight and resume the journey tomorrow?” Datuk Marsam suggested.

“Whatever you think the best for us, Datuk. We’ll follow you,” Datuk Sengkati said politely.

The three men then prepared their camping site. Once they finished, Datuk Marsam and Datuk Sengkati went to bed. The three men took turn to keep watch and guard them.

The next morning, they continued the quest early. The trip in their second day was not as hard as the previous day. However, they still met several obstacles along the way.

Once, they were walking out of another forest to find that they returned to the place they had just left. Datuk Marsam and the others were confused. It was as if they were walking in circle. They left the place and a couple of hours later they were back at the same spot. It did not make sense.

Datuk Marsam tried to calm his mind and think. Since he could not find a plausible explanation for what was happening, he asked Datuk Sengkati.

“Datuk, I think this is another ordeal we have to deal with. We are just walking in circle. Do you think so?”

“Yes, Datuk. We have walked for quite some time, leaving the forest behind, but we keep ending up in this road,” Datuk Sengkati said and sat down.

“Do you think we are lost, Datuk?” Datuk Marsam asked. “What should we do?” he added.

“I believe that there is something supernatural hindering us from taking the right path,” Datuk Sengkati said. He then stood up and said, “Wait here.”

Datuk Sengkati walked a little farther from his companions. Datuk Marsam and the three men watched him. Datuk Sengkati closed his eyes. His mouth moved as if reciting something. He probably was uttering a spell. Meanwhile the wind around them picked up pace and blew harder and harder until several tall trees were shaking.



A moment later, the wind died down. Datuk Sengkati opened his eyes and walked towards Datuk Marsam and the others.

“Let’s continue our trip and hope that we can get there soon,” he said.

Somehow, Datuk Sengkati had managed to summon the wind and removed whatever it was that had been hindering them. The five men finally arrived in Teluk Kual Village after walking for a little more than two days.

“We are here, Datuk,” Datuk Sengkati said and stopped walking. The others followed suit.

Datuk Marsam smiled. He could sense that he was going to meet the shaman soon. He could not wait to see the face of the man that had sent an outbreak to his village. However, before they could enter the village, another obstacle got in their way. As soon as they set foot on the gate of the village, thousands of arrows flew from the heaven towards them. Datuk Marsam and Datuk Sengkati quickly dove out of the way. Their three companions tried to block the arrows and guard the two elderly men.

“Is everyone alright?” Datuk Marsam asked Datuk Sengkati and the three men.

“Yes, we’re all safe and sound,” Datuk Sengkati replied.

“This must be another obstacle. Who is it do you think that sent the arrows, Datuk? Is it the shaman?”

“I think so. Be vigilant. Keep your eyes open. You three, get ready. We are not welcome here,” Datuk Sengkati said.

The three men quickly assumed a fighting stance, ready to attack. They would protect Datuk Marsam and Datuk Sengkati with their life.

The arrows were still coming, and the three men jumped out of their covers. They tried to block the arrows with their machetes.

Datuk Marsam and Datuk Sengkati watched them from behind a tree. The three men struggled to ward off the rain of arrows. They covered each other and hacked away at the arrows. Every time one of them was almost hit by an arrow, the others quickly helped him.

“Watch out! Hyaah!”

The sound of metal hitting metal was ringing in the air. The three men bravely fended off the arrows. After quite a while, the arrows stopped coming. Datuk Marsam and Datuk Sengkati came out from behind the tree. Before they could go on, they heard a man laughing.

“Ha ha ha, you are truly brave to come here looking for me,” the shaman said arrogantly.

Datuk Marsam and the others were startled. They turned around to find an old man with black attire standing in the middle of the road. His stance suggested that he challenged them.

Datuk Marsam smiled, trying to hide his surprise.

“Lah banyak lumpur yang kami pijak, lah banyak jalan yang kami tempuh, mohon perkenan tuan yang bijak, kamilah hendak sampaikan keluhan (We have gone through rocky and muddy lands, we have walked under the sun and the rain. Excuse us, oh, wise man; we come here to complain),” Datuk Marsam uttered a *seloka* as a sign that he wanted to talk.

“You shouldn’t have come so far to see me. You look so exhausted. You can just call me from your village, you know? I can be there in a blink of an eye,” the shaman said.

Hearing that response, Datuk Marsam just smiled. He said, “We come here to ask what we have done to offend you, o Shaman? If we have indeed offended you, we humbly beg your forgiveness. However, we still want to know why did you send the plague to our village?”

“You and your village had done nothing at all against me. I just want to test you, Datuk Marsam. I heard you are a wise and just leader.



You must be very skillful. Only the chosen one can be a leader. I want to test your leadership, Datuk Marsam,” the shaman replied.

“Testing me? Testing my leadership? What do you mean?” Datuk Marsam was confused.

“Ha ha ha... Datuk, you are so naïve,” the shaman laughed.

After seeing how the shaman acted, Datuk Marsam became angry. The shaman did not respect him at all. “Enough! Tell me what do you want? I am sick of your arrogance. Take back the disease you sent to our village. Now!” Datuk Marsam yelled. His whole body shook with anger.

“Do you really want to know what I want, Datuk? Very well. Listen closely. If you want me to take back the disease, I have a condition. Marry me to your two daughters and I’ll take back the disease and heal your people,” the shaman replied.

Datuk Marsam and his companions were startled once again. They could not believe what they had just heard. Feeling offended, Datuk Marsam replied with a louder voice.

“Is that what you want, Shaman? I will give you the answer right here and right now. You will never get what you want. I will never have a son in law like you!”

The shaman was furious. He quickly attacked Datuk Marsam.

At first, Datuk Marsam tried to block the attack. However, since Datuk Marsam seemed overwhelmed, his four companions jumped and joined the fight. They worked together to bring the shaman down.

After a while, they managed to defeat the shaman. He laid down on the ground with many wounds on his body. With the last ounce of his strength, the shaman uttered a curse, “Datuk, listen to my words. I swear that the disease in your village will never go away. Until the end of time, every young man in your village will suffer from it, even if just for a while.”

Datuk Marsam jumped to end the shaman’s life. However, before he could hit him, the shaman disappeared into thin air.

Datuk Marsam, Datuk Sengkati, and the three men decided to return to their village.

“What do we do, now, Datuk?” Datuk Marsam asked Datuk Sengkati.

“We’d better go home. We have gone for a while. The people must be worried,” Datuk Sengkati replied.

They quickly walked away from Teluk Kual Village and returned to Paseban. Their minds were full of questions, mainly thinking about what would happen next.

Once they arrived in Paseban, the villagers welcomed them with joy. They cheered as if the five men had just returned from battlefield. Datuk Marsam then recounted all that they had gone through.



Time passed by and the outbreak gradually disappeared. One by one, the young men returned to health. Desa Paseban became peaceful again.

Even though it had been so long, Datuk Marsam still remembered the shaman's curse. To prevent similar thing from happening in the future, Datuk Marsam decided to marry his daughters, Putri Selasih and Putri Selaras. The two girls were filial children that they obeyed Datuk Marsam without question.

“My children, I want to marry you with men of my choosing. Do you object?” he asked his daughters.

The two girls nodded their agreement. They believed that whatever their father was planning was for the best.

Datuk Marsam then invite the whole village to meet at his house. He uttered his wish to the people and asked for their suggestions and opinion regarding who might be the most suitable husband for each of his daughters. He wished to choose kind man with leadership spirit. Those who are responsible and honest. He did not care whether they came from noble family or common people.

After his discussion with the people of Paseban Village, Datuk Marsam decided on two names who would marry his daughters. They were Mencora and Tanjung.

Mencora was one of the three men accompanying Datuk Marsam during his quest finding the shaman. He came from a poor family, but his martial art skills were exceptional. Meanwhile, Tanjung was a handsome, intelligent man from a noble background.

Before the two men were officially married to his daughters, Datuk Marsam gave them challenges to make sure that they deserved to marry his daughters.

“I have chosen you to marry my daughters in the future. However, you have to complete my challenges. If you think you will not succeed, you can just withdraw,” Datuk Marsam said.

“Are you testing us, Datuk?” Mencora asked.

“Yes. Are you willing to go through my test?”

Both of them looked at each other and nodded. They accepted the challenge. They feel that it was a proud thing to be challenged by their leader.

“Yes, Datuk. If you want to test us, we are ready. We are prepared to complete your challenge, whatever it is. We will not waste this opportunity,” Tanjung replied.

Datuk Marsam then explained the test. Mencora was asked to lead the region along the banks of Batanghari River. That region was known to produce a lot of fishing product. Meanwhile, Mencora was appointed to lead the downstream area, where the people

lived through farming. They had to lead for three months. Even though they had been appointed as leaders of those areas, any important decision should go through Datuk Marsam first.

Two months had passed. The two men had made several achievements in their respective areas. The increase in income from fishing and farming had made the people of Paseban Village even more prosperous. Datuk Marsam acknowledged their achievement and praised them. Slowly, his two daughters began to fall in love with the two men. Putri Selasih felt attracted to Mencora, while Putri Selaras adored Tanjung.

“My dear daughters, come here for a moment,” Datuk Marsam called his daughters one evening. “I sensed something in your hearts,” he added.

“What do you mean, Father?” Princess Selaras asked, glancing furtively at her sister.

“You are hiding something from me.”

“No, Father. We are not hiding anything. It’s just that it’s inappropriate if we bring it out in a conversation,” Putri Selasih tried to explain.

“What are you saying?” Datuk Marsam asked.

“We are too shy to say it, Father,” Putri Selasih turned her blushing face away from his father. Putri Selaras followed suit.

“I know your secret, dear daughters. I have watched you for a long time. I can read whatever is in your innocent heart,” Datuk Marsam smiled.

Datuk Marsam then asked his daughters to sit beside him.

“You know that I love you with all my heart, don’t you?”

“Yes, Father.”

“Ever since your mother passed away, I have no one else to turn to, except you two. Now you are adults. It is time for you to leave me and marry someone. I believe it is appropriate if Mencora and Tanjung marry each of you. They are extraordinary men. I believe they can take good care of you,” Datuk Marsam said.

“We love you too, Father. You are our life. Even though Mother is not here anymore, your love and care is more than enough for us,” Putri Selaras said. “About those two men, we...”

“That’s what I’m talking about. I see them in your heart. You don’t have to keep it a secret from me. Selasih, . . .”

“Yes, Father.”

“Are you sure that you choose Mencora as your husband?” Datuk Marsam asked, hiding a smile. “And you, Selaras, ...”

“Yes, Father...”

“You have decided on Tanjung, haven’t you?”

The two girls smiled and blushed. They could not look at their father in the eyes. “I take that as a yes,” Datuk Marsam said when the two girls did not reply. “I know I have chosen the right men, haven’t I?”

“Well, that’s settled, then. It’s late, you’d better go to bed. I’ll sit here for a while,” Datuk Marsam said to his daughters.

“Yes, Father.”

They retired to their bedroom. Meanwhile, Datuk Marsam stayed by the window, looking at the dark sky outside.

On the third month, Mencora and Tanjung were confident that they would complete the challenge and would soon marry Putri Selasih and Putri Selaras. The people of Paseban praised them as skilled men, worthy to be leaders. They even compared the two men with Datuk Marsam. They said that Mencora and Tanjung were ready to replace Datuk Marsam, if they wanted. However, another dangerous threat emerged in Paseban. Tens of thousands

of grasshoppers suddenly appeared in all fields in Paseban. Everyone immediately remembered the outbreak of disease a few years before.

The grasshoppers became more and more dangerous. They destroyed fields and farms. They even killed a lot of fish in Batanghari River. In fact, some people were found dead from poison. Most people suspected that the poison came from the grasshoppers.

Datuk Marsam quickly handled the situation.

He held a meeting with all villagers. However, they could not arrive on a decision. Even Datuk Sengkati could not find the source of this disaster. Datuk Marsam and his people became more worried.

“What is it, Datuk? Why do disasters keep happening in this village?” Datuk Marsam asked Datuk Sengkati.

During the meeting, a grasshopper landed in the middle of a table. It was different from other grasshoppers. Its wings were beautiful and its head glowed. It tried to come close to Datuk Marsam, but several villagers prevented it. They tried to kill the grasshopper. Before they hit it, the grasshopper spoke.

“Datuk Marsam, it is I, Tanjung. I don’t know how or why I suddenly change into a grasshopper. It may be a curse. Datuk, please help me,” the grasshopper begged pitifully.



Soon after that, another grasshopper landed on the table. It was bigger than the previous one. It was green all over its body. He quickly spoke, "I am Mencora, Datuk. I am cursed too. What is happening to me, Datuk? Please help me."

Datuk Marsam was taken aback. He remembered something and tears began to flow from his eyes. He said to the grasshoppers, "My Children, you are brave and strong men. This is not your fault. It happened because of me. It is my fault. I promise I will find a way to turn you back into human."

After saying that, Datuk Marsam took the grasshoppers inside his house.

The following day, Datuk Marsam met Datuk Sengkati to find a solution.

"Datuk, to what do I owe the pleasure of your visit?" Datuk Sengkati greeted him.

"Sekok duo jatuhnya padi, padi bercampur di dalam ragi, tengok perkara yang terjadi, dendam yang lamo lah muncul lagi

(One, two grains of rice falling, they landed in the yeast; Now see what is happening, the old grudge returns to feast)," Datuk Marsam responded with a *pantun*.

Datuk Marsam then poured his heart to Datuk Sengkati. He believed that the grasshoppers' attack was due to the shaman's curse. Datuk Sengkati agreed. Their suspicion increased because they knew that the grasshoppers appeared after Datuk Marsam's daughters' wedding was announced.

After discussing the matter with Datuk Sengkati, Datuk Marsam decided to face the shaman again. However, since he did not know where the shaman hid, he spread the news through his people. He asked them to send news to other villages. The message was, "Datuk Marsam invites the Shaman to Paseban Village to settle a score."

Soon, the news reached the shaman. He immediately sent words that he would visit on Thursday evening. Datuk Marsam agreed and told the whole village.

Right at the agreed time, the people gathered. The two grasshoppers, who were Mencora and Tanjung, were coming with Datuk Marsam. Datuk Sengkati stood beside his friend to support him. The wind began to blow harder. The quiet night was pierced by a strange sound. Suddenly, a swarm of grasshoppers landed on Datuk Marsam's front yard. Nobody knew where they came from.

An old man slowly emerged from the midst of the grasshoppers. He was indeed the shaman that they had been waiting for.

“The cool night touches my heart, here I am greeting you again,” the shaman smiled.

“We have been waiting for you, just tell us what you want” Datuk Marsam said loudly.

“You have changed, Datuk. I don’t even hear your *seloka*,” the shaman replied calmly, angering the people.

“I will give you an offer. If you want your village and those young men,” he said, pointing at Mencora and Tanjung grasshoppers, “to return to their normal state, you have to do my challenge.”

“Fine! What should I do?” Datuk Marsam did not even paused.

“I have prepared two glasses of water. Each of the grasshoppers on your shoulder would take some powder from the two turmeric in your yard and put them into the glass. One of the turmeric contained a poison and the other contained a spell.

If you drink the water with poison, this whole village will be mine. If you drink the water with the spell, you will turn into a grasshopper forever. Do you still want to do my challenge?” the shaman explained the rules.

Datuk Marsam quickly agreed. He ignored the objection from his people, Datuk Sengkati, and the two grasshoppers.

Datuk Marsam asked the two grasshoppers to take turmeric powder from one of the two turmeric on the ground. After they mixed the powder with the water, Datuk Marsam chose one glass for him to drink.

“Datuk, don’t drink the water in my glass. Think again, Datuk. Let me be grasshopper. I am nobody. You have to stay human because the people need you, Datuk,” Mencora grasshopper said.

Datuk Marsam took back his hand. He closed his eyes and reconsidered.

“Think again, Datuk. We don’t want to lose you. You have to stay human. Let me pay for your mistakes. Come on, drink the water from my glass,” Tanjung said.

Datuk Marsam kept his eyes closed. He seemed to be in a dilemma. He thought about his daughters. He did not want them to be married to the shaman. If he turned into a grasshopper, there was nothing to prevent the shaman to take his daughters.

On the other hand, if he chose to stay human, the shaman would rule Paseban Village. The people would never be safe anymore. They will live in fear and worry all the time.

Datuk Marsam finally made his decision. “No, My Children. I am a leader. I deserve to decide what is best for us all. I know the risk of my choice. I cannot let the evil shaman rule this village. I love

my people more than I love myself and my daughters. Let me pay for my mistake,” Datuk Marsam said to the two grasshoppers, and to the villagers.

He then walked towards Mencora grasshopper.

“Mencora, I’m proud of you. I give my daughter, Putri Selasih, for you. Take a good care of her.”

Then he turned to Tanjung and said, “And you, Tanjung, I am also proud of you. My daughter, Putri Selaras adores you. I believe you can take care of her as good as I have.”

“But, Datuk...”

“No, Mencora and Tanjung. I have made my mind. You are the best men in the whole village. It is time you lead the people.”

Datuk Marsam quickly took the glass from Mencora and drank the water. The shaman picked the glass from Tanjung and gulped the content.

Suddenly, Mencora and Tanjung returned to their own body. At the same time, Datuk Marsam turned into a grasshopper, while the shaman died and disappeared.



The whole village cried when they saw Datuk Marsam turned into a grasshopper. He told them to take care of Paseban Village and to remember him.

“Oh, people of Paseban. Let it be. I hope you can take care of this village and love it as I had loved it. Even though I am now a grasshopper, my spirit will stay in your hearts. I hope you will always remember me as Datuk Marsam, the Turmeric Grasshopper.”

Since that day, peace returned to Paseban Village. Under the leadership of Mencora and Tanjung, Paseban Village grew to be even more prosperous. Turmeric grasshopper, also known as Javanese grasshopper, was always remembered by the people.

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Informasi Lain

Lahir di Padang, 16 Juli 1979. Saat ini, bersama istri dan sepasang anak, menetap di Jambi. Beberapa kali menjadi narasumber, juri, dan pembicara di berbagai kegiatan bahasa dan sastra. Pernah menjadi staf pengajar bidang sastra di salah satu perguruan tinggi swasta. Selain masih aktif dalam organisasi kesenian, bersama beberapa orang pegiat sastra mendirikan sebuah komunitas sastra.

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