

# HAJJAH ZABEDAH SHAHID

Ibu Mithali



**RATU HATI KAMI**

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FOC

**PUSTAKA PERDANA**



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*Zabedah – the young maiden*



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(by Hawa Abdullah)

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## PREFACE

It is not easy to crystallize the idea of producing a book about your own mother. Mine in particular, has been lingering in my head for a very long time. I have always felt that a book written about my dear mother, based on materials coming from her own offsprings and relatives, would be interesting and also be a meaningful honour to her.

Hers is a very touching and moving story that simply needs to be told. At the ripe age of 85, she has done her part as a daughter, sister, wife and eventually, mother. She has had the honour of being publicly acclaimed as a Mother of the Year and Ibu Mithali. It is therefore time that her own loved ones do the honour and immortalize this wonderful woman in their own words and in the form of a book.

I am fortunate to have my cousin, Puan Hawa Abdullah, who volunteered to handle the tasks of compiling, typing and handling the manuscript for the book. She is also a major contributor to the book's content and together we collaborated to have the book produced.

My brothers and sisters, Aziz, Azlan, Azian, Azibah and Azidah gave their written contributions. Azizah provided most of the photographs featured and Azmi produced the audio visual and musical video. Finally, Hamzan (Hawa's step-son), handled the overall book layout and presentation. The book was finally finished and produced in October, 2003. It was all a family effort.

To those who have contributed to this project and turning my idea into reality, I offer my sincere thanks. To readers of the book, I hope you will get a glimpse of the historical landscape that has shaped my mother's life. Finally, and more importantly, I hope you can share in the pride, respect and affection that her loved ones (and also those who have come to know her) have for this endearing woman.



**TAN SRI DATO' AZMAN HASHIM**  
KUALA LUMPUR  
OCTOBER 2003



*Hajjah Zabedah binti Haji Shahid  
(24 April 1918 - Present)*

## IBU

Burung pipit terbang melayang  
Hinggap sekejap di pokok jati  
Dari manakah datangnya kasih sayang  
Kalau tidak dari Ibu sendiri

Gulai rebung masakan tempatan  
Di campur pula si ikan keli  
Siapakah dia yang sentiasa berkorban  
Kalau tidak si Ibu Mithali

Mendapat rezeki diberi restu  
Kamilah insan yang paling bertuah  
Terima kasih wahai Ibunda ku  
Hajjah Zabedah ..... Alhamdulillah

~ Azmi Hashim



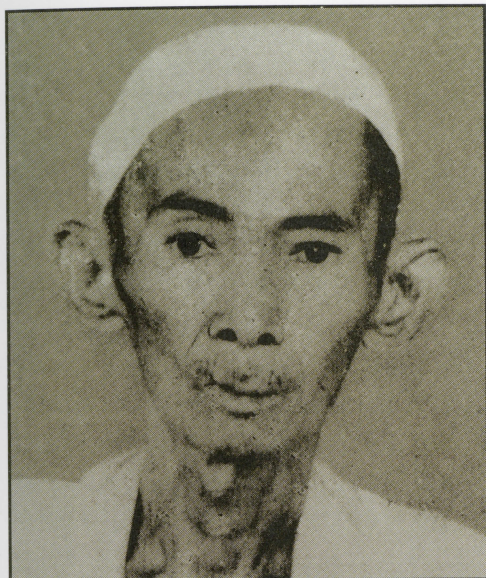
*Rear: Azlan, Azmi, Azhar, Azli, Azam  
Centre: Azibah, Azman, Aziz, Zabedah, Azizah, Azidah  
Front: Azian, Azizam, Azmah  
[Zabedah with all her 13 children]*

# HAJJAH ZABEDAH – A TRIBUTE

(by Hawa Abdullah)

## Chapter 1

### EARLY CHILDHOOD AND FAMILY



*Haji Shahid*



*Hajjah Rasnah*

Zabedah was assigned to look for firewood, help to sell the cakes her mother made, carrying them in a basket as she walked around the neighbourhood, shouting her wares to prospective buyers in their own homes. This she did before going to school. Those were days when the simple village community still frowned upon female children being sent to be educated in schools. Girls were married off as soon as they reached puberty. Zabedah was indeed fortunate to be able to attend school.

Who then were her parents? Zabedah's mother Hajjah Rasnah (Pah) came from Deli Medan while her father Haji Shahid (Embah) came from Kampong Ambal, Jawa.

Embah went to an English school in Padang Rengas in Perak up to Standard 7. He worked with Cycle & Carriage in Ipoh and later with an American tin mining company which sent him prospecting for tin throughout the country. Born to farming parents in Ipoh, Zabedah's father Haji Shahid was one of the earlier qualified engineers who worked in different areas of the country setting up water systems. By all accounts, he was a religious man who would set up a mosque wherever he went. There were times when he would be working away from home and family for a long time. It must have been difficult for her. Pah was a strict disciplinarian, was particular about doing things the right way, e.g. firewood meant for kitchen use had to be measured to ensure they were of the same length so that the wood piles would be neat. Washings hung out to dry be arranged neatly. All sarongs in a row. The same would apply to other items of clothing, underwear, etc. He was a man generous to a fault, who never had more than one shirt or sarong – the others he would give away. Zabedah remembers the hardship her mother went through when she finally gave up on her father and asked for a divorce when he married another wife.

Zabedah's mother came from a well off family in Sumatra, a woman who was resilient, resolute and altogether a tough character. Pah's house had always to be spick and span – so clean, one could eat off the floor, so to speak. A strict mother, however, she never resorted to hitting her children. She was vocal, but her bark was worse than her bite. Pah had a rubber smallholding in Kuala Kangsar from which she obtained coupons once every three months. Embah provided the household expenses. After the divorce, in order to make a living Pah resorted to selling vegetables that she grew in their little vegetable plots and edible shoots she picked from the secondary jungle close to their home. As

related to Zabedah by her mother, once a rich relative of hers spurned buying her vegetables, getting what she wanted from another seller. How disappointed and annoyed she was.

As a child Zabedah remembers going round selling cakes, picking the fallen over-ripe rambutans in people's gardens, eating the edible portions. She also has not forgotten the times she was shouted at by the owner for picking long beans from his farm.

Growing up Zabedah and her mother Pah followed Pa' Long first to Kuala Langat where she did not go to school as the school was too far away from the house. When her father was working in Ampang, Zabedah went to school in Kampong Baru, Kuala Lumpur. Her brother Abdul Rahman (Chiko) used to carry her on the back carrier of his bicycle. Zabedah likes to relate of what happened once when a leaf got caught in the bicycle spokes. She was told to remove it as he continued to cycle. With the removed leaf went part of the skin on her foot. To ease the pain, Rahman cycled fast so the wind could soothe the wound. Henceforth she was not allowed to ride to school on Rahman's bicycle.

Following this incident, it was her brother Abdul Majid who went to school with her, taking the train from Ampang where they lived, stopping at the Methodist School Station near Foch Avenue. From there they would walk all the way to Kampong Baru. It must be remembered that there was comparatively not much traffic to contend with in those days. Still the journey to school for Zabedah and her siblings was a long and arduous one. That they persevered is all the more credit to them. Their routine of going to school would not have changed had it not been for the great floods that occurred at the time. Zabedah and



*Standing : Abdul Majid, Jaafar (carrying Hasbullah), Abdul Rahman, Hashim  
Seated : Aionon, Zabedah, Hajjah Rasnah, Haji Shahid, Hajjah Mariam, Zaleha Bee, Zaleha  
Front : Ibrahim (Awang), Rahmat  
[An early photograph of Zabedah with her parents, siblings and relatives]*

Majid stopped to play in the floodwaters on the way home from school. This would have gone unknown by their parents had it not been for one of their parent's friend who spotted them having their fun in the flood waters and duly informed their father. Astonished and cross, he took off immediately to the spot to drag them home. That ended Zabedah's schooling in Kuala Lumpur.

## Chapter 2

### **TEACHER TRAINING AND EARLY MARRIED LIFE**

When her children were young, Zabedah used to tell them not to misuse their chances of studying because had she herself been given the same opportunities, she could have become a doctor. She was an intelligent student but did not study in an English school.

Zabedah started school in Kajang – a Malay school, at the age of 9 or 10 up to Standard 5. She was also the best student in her class. A niece, Hawa, remembers the time when Zabedah used to stop by at her house in Jalan Timor with her basket of cakes on her way to the Kajang Malay Girls' School, walking the distance from the quarters where she lived with her mother and her sister Zaleha, then married to an Agricultural Officer. Most of Zabedah's cakes would have been sold to the niece's mother before Zabedah even reached school. Hawa also recalls how her mother and Zabedah's sister Zaleha became friends and would go for evening walks nearby with their toddlers in tow. She has also not forgotten the times when her uncle, her mother's younger brother, Hashim, then staying with the Shahid boys, used to cycle to her Jalan Timor house to play in the compound. It is probable that the boys were then studying at the Kajang High School. Little did anyone know then what fate had in store for them all. At age 15, Zabedah began teaching at the Malay Girls School Kajang and attended weekly classes. Recommended as Selangor's best student by Cik Kontik Kamariah, Selangor Visiting Teacher then, she was trained for two years before training at the Teachers Training College in Durian Daun, Melaka in 1935 at sixteen years of age. She was among the first batch of students selected from various girls' schools all over the country to be trained at this

