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**MAHATHIR'S LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION FOR SOCIAL  
CHANGE ON INDIAN COMMUNITY IN MALAYSIA: INDIAN  
HINDU SPIRITUAL VALUES**



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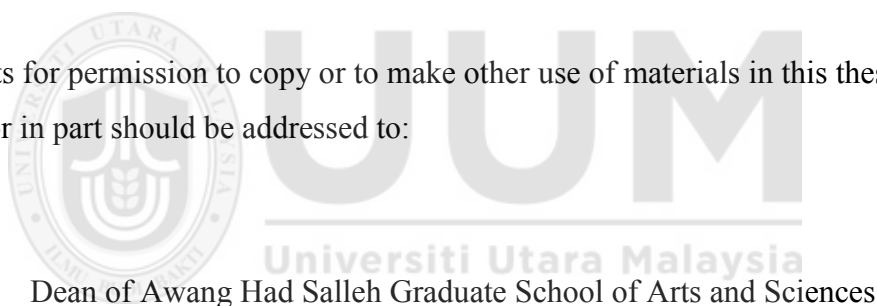
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## Abstrak

Penyelidikan ini adalah tentang komunikasi kepemimpinan Mahathir dalam mewujudkan perubahan sosial di kalangan masyarakat India. Walaupun banyak penyelidikan berkaitan komunikasi kepemimpinan telah dijalankan, namun kajian tentang hubungan pemimpin yang berasal daripada kaum majoriti dengan pengikut kaum minoriti (India) dari sudut pandangan budaya tidak banyak dikaji sebelum ini. Oleh itu, penyelidikan ini meneliti komunikasi kepemimpinan Mahathir dari sudut pandangan budaya masyarakat India di Malaysia. Penyelidikan ini telah menemu-bual masyarakat Hindu yang terdiri daripada golongan pemimpin serta rakyat biasa. Seramai 23 responden telah dipilih berdasarkan teknik persampelan purposif. Pengumpulan data telah dilakukan melalui teknik temu-bual, pengambilan nota dan rakaman audio. Respons deskriptif masyarakat India terhadap komunikasi kepemimpinan Mahathir ke arah perubahan sosial diterokai dan dibentangkan berdasarkan teori kepemimpinan transformasional. Penemuan dan konklusi yang dibentangkan adalah berdasarkan data yang dikumpul, persoalan penyelidikan dan kajian literatur. Berdasarkan analisa tematik, lima tema telah dikenalpasti iaitu konsep komunikasi kepemimpinan masyarakat India, komunikasi kepemimpinan Mahathir, pengaruh budaya India dalam pembentukan persepsi terhadap komunikasi kepemimpinan Mahathir, pengaruh komunikasi kepemimpinan terhadap perubahan sosial, respons dan kehendak masyarakat India terhadap komunikasi kepemimpinan Mahathir. Berdasarkan penemuan kajian, model komunikasi kepemimpinan yang bersesuaian dengan masyarakat India telah dibentuk. Model ini dapat dijadikan sebagai panduan dalam mengurus dan menangani isu masyarakat India yang merupakan masyarakat minoriti. Penyelidikan ini sememangnya memberi pemahaman yang mendalam terhadap komunikasi kepemimpinan, khususnya perhubungan antara pemimpin dari kaum majoriti dengan pengikut minoritinya dari sudut pandangan budaya.

**Kata Kunci:** Komunikasi Antara Budaya, Minoriti, Komunikasi politik, Komunikasi transformasi

## **Abstract**

This research focuses on Mahathir's leadership communication in creating social changes among Indians in Malaysia. Various studies were conducted on leadership communication but researches which touches on the leadership communication between a leader of a majority community (Malay) and his/her followers from the minority group (Indian) from the cultural perspective are limited. Therefore, this study investigates the leadership communication of Mahathir from the Indian perspective. The researcher interviewed Indians in Malaysia including leaders and commoners based on purposive sampling method. A total of 23 informants have been recruited as the study informants. Data were collected through interviewing, note-taking and audio recording. Descriptive accounts of the Indians' responses towards Mahathir's leadership communication for social changes from the Indian perspective were explored and presented using the transformational leadership theory. Based on the thematic analysis, five themes were emerged to answer the aims of the study; Indians leadership communication conception, Mahathir's leadership communication, the influence of Indian culture towards Mahathir's leadership communication, leadership communication for social change, responses to Mahathir's leadership communication and the expectation of Indians towards leadership communication. Based on the findings of this study, a leadership communication model from the Indian perspective is developed which could be used as a reference in managing the Indians who are the minority community. This study provides an insight of leadership communication towards bringing social change, particularly focusing on the relationship of a leader and his followers from the minority community.

**Keywords:** Intercultural communication, Minority, Political communication, Transformational communication

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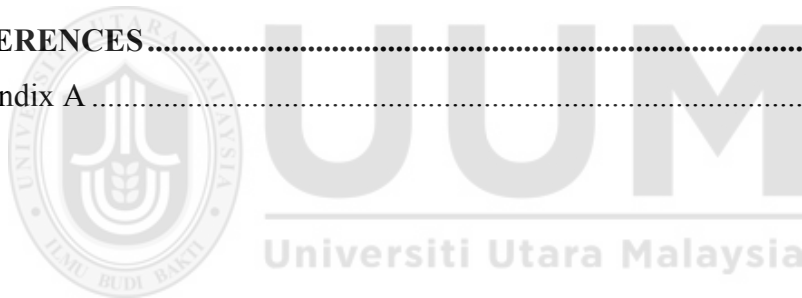
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## Glossary of Terms

*Vedas*- ancient Hindu text

*Bhagavad-Gita*- The Holy Book of Hindu; the highest and most authentic authority in Hindu. Quotation from the Bhagavad-Gita is normally followed by a reference to the number of the chapter and the number of the quoted verse

*Valmki Ramayana*- ancient Hindu literature

*Gunas*- attributes; “sattva”, “rajas” and “tamas”

“*Sattva guna*” refers to the qualities of an individual who work for the harmonization and betterment of the people and they are self-less

“*Rajas*” refers to the quality of an individual who only think for himself or herself, aiming at only ego, fame, name and power.

“*Tamas*” refers to the quality of an individual who is corrupted and driven by his/her personal interest, and willing to sacrifice anyone for selfish goals.

*Krishna*- Hindu God

*Arjuna*- Lord Krishna's follower

*Sri Rama*-Incarnation of Lord Krishna

*Sita*-Wife of Sri Rama

*Muni*-Sages

*Ayodhya*-Sri Lanka

*Guru*-master/teacher

*Karma*- Action

*Dakshyam* - Problem-Solver

*Sattva-samuddhi*- Ethical

*Yagna*- Inclusiveness

*Buddhi Yoga*- Critical

*Satyam* - Fulfilling promise

*Yoga*- Control and manage

*Brahma-bhuta*- sacrificing

*Buddhi*- Intellectual

*Karma*-refers to the action that one engages which involves body, mind and speech

*Karma-yoga*-duty-oriented

*Yoga*- refers to device or intelligent method

*Upanishads*-ancient Hindu literature

*Mahabharata*- a part of Bhagavad-Gita

*Sraddha*- utter faith

*Susrusa* –obedience

*Sama*- refers to the way of explaining to people by using common sense and logical explanations.

*Dana*- refers to the explanation by providing an incentive

*Bheda*- refers to selective discrimination and differentiation.

*Danda* - the use of force

*Nishkama karma* -selfless action

*Yagna*- Participatory Leadership

*Brahma-bhuta*- Pure service

*Jnana*- Knowledge

*Tapah van mayam*- Clear message and Delivery

*Buddhi*- Intelligent in various field

*Dakshyam*- Problem-solver

*Vijnana*- Wisdom

*Sattva-samuddhi*- being ethical

*Satyam*- Sincerity

*Abhijatasya*-Value-driven

*Nirguna*- Not-corrupted

*Buddhi Yoga*- Visionary



## **List of Abbreviations**

MIC-Malaysian Indian Congress

UMNO-United Malays National Organisation

HINDRAF-Hindu Rights Action Force

TLT-Transformational Leadership Theory

NEP-New Economic Policy

NDP-National Development Policy

IKIM- Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia (Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia)

GLOBE- Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness

NGO- Non-Governmental Organisation



# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 An Overview

This chapter begins by describing the background of the study. It also discusses the need of the study, followed by problem statement, research questions, research objectives, study significance and scope. Next, the conceptual definitions are explained and finally the summary of the thesis is given.

### 1.2 Research Background

Researches on transformational leadership theory for more than twenty-five years indicated that transformational leadership affects followers' attitude and behaviour (Mhatre & Riggio, 2014) and it was evident that there is a sufficient conceptual gap in understanding the functionality of transformational leadership theory (Yukl 2006; van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). However, it was found that research investigating transformational leadership theory from a contextual perspective is still underdeveloped and not fully explored, specifically leadership communication involving leaders who belong to majority community and their followers from the minority group in cultural context (Ayman, & Korabik, 2010). Consistent with the idea, Burns (1978) stated that transformational leadership theory explains that a leader who possesses cultural knowledge of his followers will be able to contribute towards betterment of the followers. It was further supported by Kanungo and Misra (2004) who stated that transformational leadership is influenced by culture. Further, Singh and Bhandarker (1990) also strongly asserted that a leader can bring change in society if his leadership communication is consistent with the culture of his or her followers.

However, it was apparent that very limited studies on transformational leadership theory were conducted, especially in a multicultural context (Lynn-Sze & Ahmad, 2017; Yukl, 2006). Most studies mainly focused on western context and treated society as homogenous, such as GLOBE study (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). However, scholars argued that the leadership outcome varies across cultural context or heterogeneous society. For instance, Graen (2006) criticizes that the multicultural perspective was overlooked in the GLOBE study. This is consistent with the discussion by Bass (1990); Chemers and Ayman (1993) who stated that leadership prototypes and conceptions vary from one culture to another and they have dramatically brought different implications in different multicultural contexts. Andreouli (2013) also pointed out that many researchers failed to discuss the diversity in the society. Indeed, it shows the need to explore transformational leadership theory in a multicultural context or heterogeneous society.

Leadership communication literatures state that a leader could bring developments in society if his or her leadership communication is consistent with the cultural values of his or her followers (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014). Through this, a leader would be able to understand his or her followers' needs and requirements and fulfill them accordingly. Thus, this study perceived intercultural communication sensitivity is an important element in bringing changes in society. Furthermore, leadership communication literatures also indicated that a leader is able to influence followers through the shared goals set by a leader (Bass, 1999). Furthermore, Lord, Brown, and Freiberg (1999) emphasised that leaders could affect subordinates' performance by influencing their values. The discussion

above lays the foundation about the relationship between leadership communication and culture.

The development of a nation depends on the leadership of a leader and this statement was supported by Wehrich, Cannice, and Koontz (2008) who argued that a leader could only implement his ideas, policies, vision and mission if his ideas are accepted by the people in the nation. A study conducted by Ali, Ismael, and Nisbin (2011) stated that a leader of a country needs to receive consent followers before implementing his or her vision. Thus, effective leadership communication is important to ensure followers accept a leader's idea (Willburn, Hackman, and Criswell, 2008). This is vital for a leader to bring development or social changes to the nation. Thus, it is apparent that leadership communication is a process influencing members of society to move towards development.

Leadership communication is referring to the controlled, purposeful transfer of meaning by which individuals influence a single person, a group, an organisation or community by using the full range of their communication abilities and resources to connect positively with their audience, overcome interferences, and create and deliver messages that guide, direct, motivate and inspire others to action (Barrett, 2014) According to Cundiff and Komarraju (2008) leadership communication is a process that influence people's attitude which includes perceptions and preferences, and this is supported by scholars (Kellett, Humphrey, & Sleeth, 2002; Amabile, Schatzel, Moneta, & Kramer, 2004; Weinberger, 2009; Czech & Forward, 2010). Hence, effective communication enables a leader to influence his or her followers towards effective changes or development (Holladay & Coombs, 1994; Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; DiFonzo & Bordia, 1998; Schweiger & Denisi, 1991). It was found that culture

plays an important role of an agent in leadership communication. This situation is evident in a study conducted by Bryman, Collison, Grint, Jackson, and Uhl-Bien (2011) who discussed the effects of culture on leadership communication process. In addition to this, scholars also supported that leadership communication depends on the cultural values of followers. For instance, Melendez (1996) stated that communication becomes challenging when it involves different cultures. Melendez's study has stressed that a leader is able to communicate effectively with followers of different culture if the leader has intercultural communication sensitivity competency. Besides that, Hunt, Boal, and Sorenson (1990) study shows that that the cultural background of leader and the followers impact the development process of the nation. This is because a good understanding of cultural background will help an individual to know the needs and requirements of others.

Furthermore, House and Aditya (1997) claimed that there are more than 3000 studies conducted focusing on the relationship between leaders and their immediate followers. However, those studies neglected the cultural context involving a leader and his rapport with followers of different culture. Lynn-Sze, Yusof & Ahmad (2014) also indicated that there are limited numbers of studies conducted relating leadership in the context of intercultural communication, especially studies relating to Malaysian leaders and followers from the multi-cultural communication context.

Realising the importance of culture in leadership communication, many communities and countries in the world are now trying to analyse and explore their own system of leadership. In Malaysia, the fifth Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi promoted an approach called Islam Hadhari or civilisational Islam, which includes leadership communication as an integral part of

the approach (Swee Hock & Kesavapany, 2006). Meanwhile, the Indian civilisation, one of the oldest civilisation with recorded history of more than 5000 years has also incorporated leadership communication lessons. Several ancient Indian classics such as the Valmiki Ramayana, the Mahabharata (includes the Bhagavad-Gita, the Puranas, etc offers several leadership communication lessons which are useful even in the modern context. For instance, Bhagavad-Gita explains the challenges faced by modern day leaders and their responsibilities towards their followers. It also indicates the leadership communication qualities needed to facilitate followers in different culture. However, there are arguments that the leadership communication studies in Indian context should also focus on development of indigenous leadership communication models, which revolve around Indian cultural roots and values (Panda & Gupta, 2007).

Mahathir was appointed as the seventh Prime Minister of Malaysia in May 2018. Tun Mahathir is one of the renowned Third World leaders in several ways, which could be seen in his effort and motivation to change Malaysia into a fully developed nation (Khoo, 1995). As the fourth Prime Minister from 1981-2003, Mahathir has introduced various policies, visions, missions for the people. According to Kirkpatrick and Locke (1996), Mahathir brought a lot of developments in Malaysia since he became the premier of the nation for 22 years (1981-2003). Gomez also stated that during his leadership (1981-2003), Mahathir has well-packaged most of government ideologies, policies and concepts in the form of public campaigns to gain support from the general and segmented publics. In terms of Mahathir's leadership towards the Indian community in Malaysia, there are two scenarios can be seen. Firstly is that Mahathir's leadership communication has contributed to the

achievements of the Indians and secondly, he managed to get support from all the ethnic groups in Malaysia, including the Indians (in Ahmad 2010).

Under Mahathir's leadership as the fourth prime minister, the Indian community has shown progress in various sectors. For instance, from the economic perspective, the Indian community's achievements in Malaysia were significant. During Mahathir's leadership from 1981 to 2001 the household income of Indian community has increased significantly. Before his premiership in 1979, the gross household income of Indian community was RM756 and in the early year of his premiership in 1984, the gross household income of the Indians has increased to RM1107. It can be seen that there was a significant increase in the gross household income of Indians compared to 1971. The household income of Indians further increased in the middle years of Mahathir's leadership from RM1604 in 1992 to RM2140 in 1995. At the end of Mahathir's premiership, the household income of Indians continued to increase from RM2702 in 1999 to RM3044 in 2002. This gradual increment of household incomes shows Malaysian Indians' progress in the economic sector (see Table 2, Mean Monthly Gross Household Income by Ethnic Group, Strata and State, Malaysia, 1970-2014, Economic Planning Unit, Malaysia for complete data)

The development of Indian community in the economic sector can also be seen through the significant decrease in poverty rates during Mahathir's premiership (1981-2003). In 1979, a year before he came to power as Prime Minister, the poverty rate was 19.8 but this number dropped significantly to 10.1 in 1984 during the early years of his leadership. The poverty rate dropped further to 3.4 in 1999, in the edge of his leadership. It was clear that there was economic growth in Indian community

during Mahathir's leadership (see Table 7 Incidence of Poverty by Ethnic Group, Strata and State, Malaysia, 1970-2014, Economic Planning Unit, for complete data).

From the social perspective, statistics show that Indians in Malaysia has progressed in many ways. For example, the enrolment number of Indian students and primary schools increased significantly from 73,513 students and 579 schools in 1981 to 88,810 students and 526 schools in 2001. This shows primary school education opportunity was widely available during Mahathir's leadership for Indian students (Education Ministry of Malaysia Statistic, 2004). In terms of professional and technical growth, the Indians witnessed an increase in proportion in the category, from 9.9 per cent in 1995 to 11.0 per cent in 2000. The registered Indian professionals by ethnic group also shown an increase from 7.9 per cent in 1990 to 9.0 in 1995 and 10.6 in 2000 (see Table 3-4 Employment by Occupation and Ethnic Group, 1990, 1995 and 2000, 7th Malaysia Plan, 1996-2000, for complete data). The statistics show that under the premiership of Mahathir, the Indians in Malaysia have progressed in various sectors such as professional sector saw a significant increase (see Table 7 Incidence of Poverty by Ethnic Group, Strata and State, Malaysia, 1970-2014, Economic Planning Unit, for complete data).

However, research conducted by various researchers showed that Mahathir's leadership was also criticised for causing marginalisation among the Indians in Malaysia. Mahathir was perceived as a leader who only concerned to uplift the Malays which could be seen from the gradual removal of affirmative action policies and the implementation of different government policies such as the New Development Plan (1991-2000) which affected the Indians badly (Ganesan 2002). The privileges given to the Malay communal led to marginalisation of non- Malays in

various sectors including business opportunities, reduction in the number of intakes into higher educational institutions, denial of scholarships, and reduction of space for the promotion of ethnic and cultural rights of non-Malays (Ramasamy, 2004). Furthermore, the needs and necessities, fundamental rights and equal opportunities of progress were denied for Indians under Mahathir's premiership (Lahiri, 2008). Racial discrimination of Indians were evident in many fields, including: allotment of business licenses, eligibility in receiving government scholarships, closure of Tamil primary schools, complications in citizenship applications and permits for taxis, allotment of land, limited admissions to universities and appointment of lecturers or teachers, etc. (Lahiri, 2008). A study conducted by Karmveer Singh (2013) stated that the Indians suffered economic discrimination under Malaysia's Bumiputera policies since 1971. During his premiership, Mahathir also stated that Hinduism and animism were controlling and influencing the Malay community (Khoo, 1995). Thus, the government under Tun Mahathir tried to eliminate Hinduism elements that were indirectly influencing the Malays which was perceived by elite Indians to be the fuel behind the negation of things related to "Indians" and "Hinduism" (Cangi, 2014). Hence, Mahathir's leadership (1981-2003) caused worries among Indians as they feared that the government's Islamic policies were ultimately aimed at assimilating non-Malays (Willford, 2007). Mahathir had advocated Islamic approaches and due to his approach, he was labeled as an ultra-Malay person and that has contributed to enormous issues in Indian community (Mahathir & Ishihara, 1995).

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Intercultural communication sensitivity or inter-ethnic relations is a major challenge to the social stability of Malaysia (Baharuddin, 2005; Taman & Krauss (2017)).

Mahathir, as the longest serving Prime Minister of Malaysia has been viewed as a leader who was more concerned with the majority community (Malay) that he represented and marginalised the Indian community (Wain, 2012; Kailasam, 2015). However, interestingly, despite many issues under the leadership of Mahathir, the Indian community in Malaysia recorded improvements in various fields (see Table 7 Incidence of Poverty by Ethnic Group, Strata and State, Malaysia, 1970-2014, Economic Planning Unit, for complete data) and secondly, it was found that the cultural sensitivity among non-Muslims towards Muslims improved during his leadership (Saad, 2012). This situation could be explained through leadership communication theories such as transformational leadership theory which explains that culture plays an important role in facilitating leadership communication process between a leader and his followers which leads to social change. Based on transformational leadership theory, it was indicated that cultural knowledge and understanding between a leader and followers will be able to bring betterment among the followers (Kanungo & Misra, 2004; Bakar, Jian & Fairhurts, 2014). Lynn-Sze, Yusof and Ahmad (2014) also strongly asserted that the change in society will happen when there is good intercultural communication sensitivity between a leader and his or her followers.

Literatures clearly indicate that developments in a society happen if the cultural understanding of between a leader and followers is good Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Blair & Bligh, 2018). This ensures the leadership communication of a leader is consistent with the followers' cultural needs and requirements. Thus, this study viewed culture as an important element in bringing changes in society. To support the claim, Lord, Brown, and Freiberg (1999) explained in their studies that

leadership communication process between a leader and followers could contribute changes among followers by influencing their values. Therefore, this study perceived Mahathir as a transformational leader who contributes to social changes among Indians in Malaysia. By understanding the relationship between transformational leadership communication and culture, this study explores Mahathir's leadership communication in Malaysia from Indian Hindu spiritual values perspective.

Since independence in 1957, politics in Malaysia is based on ethnicity (Ayodurai, Yahaya, & Zainuddin, 2002). Malaysia is a multiracial country and the Malaysian government always provides special care and attention to issues involving different ethnic groups. As evident, the government has implemented culture-based public policy to avoid any racial conflict in order to create a positive environment (Bjerregaard, Luring, & Klitmoller, 2009; Hall, 1959, Gudykunst & Nishida, 2001). For instance, after the 1969 race riots, the national ideology called "Rukunegara" was established to create a basic consensus on communal issues and to handle the extreme demands of certain ethnic groups (Means, 1991). The existence of the specific-ethnic based political parties such as the Malayan Indian Congress, United Malaya National Organisation, Malayan Chinese Association indicates the ethnic preferences by Malaysians (Dahles & Leng, 2014).

It was evident that intercultural communication sensitivity or inter-ethnic relations become a major challenge to the social stability of Malaysia (Abdul Rahman, 2000; Baharuddin, 2005; Brown, 1994). Interestingly, Mahathir Mohamad, as a leader who represented the majority group and led followers from various culture backgrounds, introduced many Islamic based policies and institutions in the 1980s and 1990s. It can be seen through the establishment of Islamic banking, Islamic centre

such as the Institute of Islamic Understanding (IKIM) and the International Islamic University of Malaysia. Besides that, in 1988, Mahathir made amendment to Article 121 (1A) of the Federal Constitution, by removing jurisdiction of the civil courts over Islamic matters and revising the legal system to make it 'more Islamic' (Guan, 2005).

Due to his leadership approach, Mahathir was viewed as a leader who was merely concerned with the majority community (Malay communal) that he represented and Wain (2012) labeled Mahathir as 'ultra' or "Malay chauvinist" because of his policies which focused more on uplifting the Malay community. Mahathir used "Islam" as a powerful tool in conquest of political domination and as a shield against external interference in Malay politics (Willford, 2007). Despite his leadership approach, the Indian community showed progress in various sectors and they also showed better cultural sensitivity (Saad, 2012). This situation could be explained through transformational leadership theory which describes that social change among followers could happen if the leadership communication of a leader is consistent with the culture of his or her followers (Barrett, 2014).

Transformational leadership theory explains that social change happens when there is a good intercultural communication sensitivity between leader and follower. The intercultural communication sensitivity between a leader and followers could be reflected through the communication between leader and follower (Barrett 2010). It was also consistent with the study conducted by Miftari (2014) who stated that a transformational communication is influenced by culture. Singh and Bhandarker (1990) also strongly asserted that the change in society would be successful when there is a good intercultural communication sensitivity between a leader and his or her followers (Yukl, 2006). However, it was apparent that only few studies have been

conducted focusing on the areas of leadership communication between the majority and minority community, specifically on the intercultural communication sensitivity between a leader who represents the majority community and his followers who are from minority community (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Lynn-Sze, Yusof & Ahmad, 2014). Consistent with the idea, scholars also emphasised on the need of development of culture-based leadership communication model that could enrich the knowledge of leadership communication from the cultural perspective (Panda & Gupta, 2004; Lamm, Carter, Lamm, and Lindsey, 2017).

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the responses of Malaysian Indian Hindus towards the leadership communication of Mahathir from the Indian Hindu spiritual values perspective. Indian culture provides a clear understanding of an individual's mental make-up which could be explained through Vedanta philosophy. The philosophy explains that different people have different qualities that influence their attitudes and behaviors in daily life (Bhagwad Gita, III. 20-21). Hence, this study perceived that Indian culture influences Indians' perception towards Mahathir's leadership towards social change among Indians. This research focuses on Malaysian Indians consist of Hindus who were born in or immigrated to Malaysia from India or Sri Lanka. The discussion of the problem statement above raises the following research questions:

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

To understand the influence of culture on leadership communication between majority and minority group, this research study has proposed the following questions:

1. What is leadership communication from the Indians' perspective?

2. How does Mahathir's leadership communication contribute to social changes of Indians in Malaysia?
3. What are the characteristics of Mahathir's leadership communication from the Indians cultural perspective?
4. What is the Indian culture that influences the Indians' perspectives on leadership communication?
5. What is the leadership communication model that acceptable by the Malaysian Hindus?

### **1.5 Research Aims**

The main aim of this research is to explore Mahathir's leadership communication from the Indian community perspective. Specifically, this research attempts:

1. To define the leadership communication conception from the Indians perspective.
2. To explain the influence of Mahathir's leadership communication towards social changes among the Indians in Malaysia.
3. To identify the characteristics of Mahathir's leadership communication from the cultural perspective of Indian community in Malaysia.
4. To explain how Indian culture influences the community's perspective on Mahathir's leadership communication.
5. To develop a leadership communication model that is accepted by the Indian community in Malaysia.

## **1.6 Scope of the study**

To explain the scope of this study, the key concept of leadership communication has been identified, which is transformational leadership communication. Transformational leadership communication discusses four communication elements of leadership communication; charisma or idealised influence, inspirational motivation, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation. The concepts explain that a leader should be reflecting transformational values by showing enthusiasm and being a role model to his/her followers. Transformational values also include providing consistent assistance, stimulating intellectual experience by communicating ideas and being considerate during interaction (Barrett, 2014). One of the central arguments of transformational leadership communication is; leadership communication of a leader should be consistent with the culture of his or her followers in order to influence them towards changes. In line with the literatures of leadership communication, this study perceived leadership communication could contribute to social change or development in society. Again, positive development could be achieved through a good understanding of followers' culture that comes from an effective leadership communication. Hence, culture has been perceived as a bridge between leaders and followers in driving followers towards social change (development).

Therefore, the current study focuses on the transformational leadership communication from the followers' cultural perspective, specifically examines the leadership communication of Mahathir for social change from the Indian Hindu spiritual values perspective.

## 1.7 The Significance of the study

There were many studies conducted to analyse the assumptions of leadership communication theories but mostly focused on western countries (Barrett, 2014; Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014). However, the cross-cultural studies discovered that not all the assumptions of the theories are applicable to all cultures in the world (Hofstede, 2001; Pillai, Scandura, & Williams, 1999; Smith & Peterson, 2002). Studies discussed that different leadership style produces different outcomes in different cultural context (Beyer, 1999; Conger, 1999; Pillai et al., 1999; Smith & Peterson, 2002; Paramova & Blumberg, 2017). Furthermore, in the best knowledge of the researcher, only few researches were conducted on leadership communication from cultural perspective, especially in areas related to leadership communication between the majority community and minority group in Malaysia (Ayman, & Korabik, 2010; Lynn-Sze, Yusof & Ahmad, 2014). Hence, this study provides a new dimension to leadership communication from multi-cultural context, specifically leadership communication involving two communities of difference cultures. It is important to investigate leadership communication in a multi-cultural country because culture and religion of communities plays an important role in creating differences between different ethnic groups in countries like Malaysia (Beyers, 2017).

Besides that, many local researches were conducted relating Islamic conception on topics related to leadership communication such as Tayeb (1997); Beekun and Badawi (2005); Abuznaid (2005). Furthermore, studies relating Chinese philosophy and leadership communication also have been conducted related to Confucianism, Lao Tzu (Taoism) & Sun Tzu (Art of War) (Muniapan & Low, 2011; Lynn-Sze, Yusof & Ahmad, 2014). Furthermore, there were also many researchers

conducted on Mahathir's leadership from different perspectives since 1990 (Ahmad Atory, 2005; Rusdi & Sivamurugan, 2006). As evidence, comparison is done between the leadership of Mahathir and Tunku Abdul Rahman (the first Prime Minister of Malaysia) (Case, 1991), Paradoxes of Mahathirism (Khoo, 1995); Malaysian Politics under Mahathir (Mauzy & Milne, 2002), The Leadership Factor in Administrative Reform in Malaysia with a Specific Study on the Leadership of Dr. Mahathir (Hussain, 1997), Contesting the Vision: Mahathirism, The Power Bloc and the Crisis of Hegemony on Malaysia (Hilley, 2009); Mahathir Mohamad in Turbulent Times by (Wain, 2012). However, it was apparent that research works in analysing modern leadership communication practices from the Indian cultural perspectives are limited (Muniapan, 2006). Therefore, this study is expected to fill in the gap by exploring Mahathir's leadership communication from the Indians' cultural perspective. Hence, this study could enrich and contribute to a new knowledge of leadership communication studies from the Indian Hindu spiritual values perspective.

Besides that, according to House and Aditya (1997) there are more than 3000 studies listed by Bass (1990) which focused on the relationship between leaders and their immediate followers, however, the studies neglected the cultural context particularly the rapport between leaders and followers who are from different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, this study expected to bridge the gap by exploring leadership communication between Mahathir and Indians in Malaysia. In Malaysia, Indians are one of the minority groups consists of 7.0% of the total population of Malaysia whereby Mahathir represented the Malays, the majority group with the highest percentage of population (68.6%) in Malaysia (Population Distribution by Ethnic

Group, Malaysia, 2016). Thus, this study will also contribute to the understanding of leadership communication from the perspective of a minority community.

In addition, this study expected to add more literatures about leadership communication from Asian perspective. Many studies were conducted touching on Asian leadership involving countries such as Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and India. Furthermore, there are also studies conducted about Mahathir's role as an Asian leader. For example, a study was conducted to compare development policies of Sukaerno and Mahathir (Ismail, 2011) and another study focused on Mahathir leadership and Chinese culture (Confucianism and Sun Tzu Art of War) was (Gannon, 2004). Hence, the findings of this research could contribute to the body of knowledge or study related to leadership communication of an Asian leader (Mahathir) from the Indian Hindu perspective.

Lastly, it was found that although vast researches have been conducted examine leadership theories, however, the studies neglected the communication perspective (Northouse, 2010; Yukl, 2010). According to Tourish and Jackson (2008), communication is treated as secondary to other managerial actions and responsibilities of a leader. It was discussed that a leader who able to communicate is good to create successful change among the followers by accomplishing goals and motivating followers (Simonsson, 2002; Johanson & Heide, 2008). Therefore, the present study investigates the Mahathir leadership communication for social change from the Indians' Hindu spiritual values perspective.

## **1.8 Practical Significance**

This study has provided evidence of the lived experience of Indians on leadership communication of Mahathir. The results of the study revealed how Mahathir's leadership communication affected the Indians. The findings also provide an insight to the concept of leadership communication between two different groups namely majority-minority or Malay-Indian. Interestingly, although Indian leaders have some reservations on Mahathir, it is undeniable that his leadership communication practices have impacted towards social change. Thus, Mahathir leadership communication may significantly become a reference or model in dealing with minority group such as the Indian community. The model may also apply to any Indian minority group in other locality or other parts of the globe. This is consistent with the urge of scholars to develop leadership communication model based on culture (Paramova & Blumberg, 2017). This model is expected to handle a community in different cultures, specifically the Indian community as a minority community in a multicultural context.

## **1.9 Conceptual Definition**

### **1.9.1 Leadership Communication**

Leadership communication is referring to the controlled, purposeful transfer of meaning by which individuals influence a single person, a group, an organisation or community by using the full range of their communication abilities and resources to connect positively with their audience, overcome interferences, and create and deliver messages that guide, direct, motivate and inspire others to action (Barrett, 2014). Barrett (2014) also stressed that leadership communication refers to the communication abilities of a leader to transmit meaning to others in different contexts,

including intercultural communication. In the globalisation era, a leader needs to understand the cultural diversity of a society which is fundamental to understand the needs of his or her followers and promote social change (Gooden, Creque & Chin-Loy, 2017). Leadership communication is a field that involves the process of creating and managing meaning (Fairhurst, 2011). In this study, leadership communication is perceived as culturally specific and the practice of leadership communication is deeply related to culture.

### **1.9.2 Transformational Leadership Communication**

The type of leadership communication that is analysed in this study is transformational leadership communication. Transformational leadership communication refers to the qualities of a leader that could influence his or followers towards changes in society through motivation and inspiration (Bligh & Robinson, 2010; Leonard & Grobler, 2006). Transformational leadership communication qualities could be seen when a leader inspires, motivates and stimulate a community to develop or progress (Hanson, 2014). In this context, a leader act as a change agent (Noorshahi & Yamany Dozi Sarkhabi, 2008). Past researchers concluded that transformational quality is an integral element that can contribute towards changes or improvement in a society by leading followers towards the certain goals (Certo & Certo, 2006). Thus, this study viewed transformation communication as a quality that is embedded in a leader that is in line with the cultural values of followers that drives towards betterment in the society.

### **1.9.3 Culture**

Geertz (1973) stated that culture is referring to symbolic constructions that occur within a social context. Culture also can be defined as the pattern of behaviours, values and beliefs of a group of people, which explain the peoples' behaviour (Gudykunst & Lee, 2002). To support, Spencer-Oatey (2008) also explained that culture is referring to a set of underlying assumptions, values and beliefs that belong to a group of people, and it affects the behaviour of people. Religion is an important component of a culture (Bhugra, 1996). Durkheim has classified religion as a tool to enhance cohesiveness of a society and encourage people to accept the basic social values. It was evidence that culture and religion are interdependent. Therefore, the present study perceives that discussion of culture leads to the discussion of religion, specifically the Indian culture could be referred to Hinduism. According to Flood (1996), Hinduism is the oldest school of philosophy in the world. The Vedas referring to the ancient Hindu text was found to be existed since the second millennium BCE (Witzel, 2003). This study explores Mahathir's leadership communication from the Indian cultural perspective. Thus, to understand the Indians' culture, ancient Indians' Vedic philosophy from ancient Indian literatures such as "Ramayana" and "Bhagavad-Gita" will be explored in this study. The Vedic knowledge could be understood through these two ancient literatures which were regarded as one of the greatest Indian civilization literatures. As evidence, many researches focusing on leadership have been conducted from the Indian cultural perspective based on ancient literature. For instance, a "Transformational Leadership Style Demonstrated by Sri Rama in Valmiki Ramayana" study was conducted by Muniapan (2007); (Kejriwal & Krishnan, 2004); (Rosen, 2002). The Indian philosophy indicated in the ancient literatures will be used as a guideline to explore Mahathir's leadership communication from the Indians' perspective.

#### **1.9.4 Social Change**

Social change refers to alterations in social phenomena at various levels of human life from an individual to global level (Lauer, 1977). Serveas (2008) defined social change as an impactful change or of the culture of the people. Furthermore, Serveas (2008) explained that social change is referring to the development process which involves communication between the development provider and the people. Serveas (2008) highlighted that development will only happen if the communication process is consistent and it is culturally relevant. Consistent with the definition, Black (2007) defined social change as human development, specifically focusing on the cultivation of human capabilities. Therefore, this study views social change as an improvement or development in a society, specifically the development of the Indian community in Malaysia.

#### **2.0 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the overview of the study, problem statements and the scope of the study. Furthermore, the leadership communication of Mahathir, operational definition and the elements of the significance of the study have been discussed. In the literature review section, past researches on leadership communication, the Indian historical evidence of leadership communication that led to current paradigm, Indian culture and the theories involved will be discussed. The third chapter explains the methods involved in conducting the study. The methodology involving in-depth interview will be discussed. Furthermore, data collection, and data analysis will be discussed.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This review starts with the analysis of history of leadership communication which includes early understanding of leadership communication and the ideas that led to the current paradigm. In addition, to explore the perspective of Indians on Mahathir's leadership communication, literatures related to Indian culture is examined. Ancient Hindu Vedic literature, such as the Ramayana and Bhagavad-Gita which are related to Indian values, and past researches on leadership communication in Indian context are researched and discussed as well. The theoretical perspective of leadership communication is explored too. In order to provide a clear understanding about the theories grounded in this research, this section will discuss the contemporary theories related to leadership communication and social change (development). As this study aims to investigate culture as the agent in bridging Indian community and leadership communication of Mahathir, thus, this section will also provide a theoretical grounding that explains its basis. This section also discusses how elements in Indian culture bridges the gap between leadership communication and social development by analysing the perspective of Indians towards Mahathir's leadership communication

## 2.2 Leadership Communication

Leadership communication is a field that involves creating and managing meaning (Fairhurst, 2007). Meanwhile, communication is identified as the main component of leadership communication, specifically in the process of creating and managing meaning (Tourish & Jackson, 2008); (Fairhurst, 2011); (Frese, Beigel, & Schoenborn, 2003); (Riggio, Riggio, Salinas, & Cole, 2003); (Sharmir, Arthur, & House, 1994); (Towler, 2003). Scholars expressed that communication contributes to the establishment of shared perception in people (Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014). Based on the idea provided by the scholars above, it is understood that communication is a substance of leadership communication, and it requires people to interpret messages and influence others. Thus, this present study perceived leadership communication as a process which influences people's attitude and behavior. Consistent with the understanding, Martin, Rich, and Gayle (2004) found that leaders can stimulate people's behaviors by motivating his or her followers towards changes through his or her effective communication skills. To support the claim, Kouzes and Posner (2010) identified that leadership communication is a factor that encourages people to be productive, energised, effective, motivated and committed to their work; and these factors reflects the qualities of a successful leader.

Many studies have indicated that leadership and communication are interdependent and leadership communication establishes deeply in culture and values. This may apply to an individual, a team, or an entire organisation which aims to establish and continue to build trust between a leader and the followers. As evidence, scholars concluded that communication is one of the substances of leadership (Kramer & Crespy, 2011). By understanding the importance of communication in

leadership, scholars agreed that communication is a key of effective leadership communication (Fairhurst, 2007). In short, communication was regarded as the core principle of leadership communication process specifically in leader-followers' relationships (Yukl, 2006).

Consistent with the discussion above, a study was conducted by Coombs and Holladay (2012) stressed that leadership and communication are interdependent and leadership communication is an active process which determines the perceptions of followers towards a leader's charisma. To further understand leadership communication, its components were explored. In general, leadership communication consists of two components; the content of the leader's messages and the style of message delivery. Scholars also stated that the messages sent by leaders affects followers' attitude and thinking thus, it shows that effective communication of leaders could earn followers' support and confidence, which contribute to overall effectiveness of leadership communication process (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). In short, these arguments showed that leadership communication is a process that influences followers' attitude and behaviour (Bligh, Kohles, & Meindl, 2004), especially when it involves good articulation of vision (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996).

Leadership concept was established in Egypt, 5000 years ago by philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle in 400 and 300BC. Furthermore, leadership has been identified as pivotal in dealing all situations (Bass & Stogdill, 1990) and seen as an integral part in determining positions of human (Wren, 1995). Leadership studies found that a leader could make followers' activities more meaningful which could be attained through communication process (Pondy, 1978). According to Mullins (1996),

leadership is a relationship between a leader and his followers in which a leader influences the behavior of his or her followers. The literatures stated that a leader should be a person who is able to coordinate events or activities aligned with his organisation's mission besides motivating the followers. Thus, leaders must be able to work with others and possess good communication skills (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs, & Fleishman, 2000). In this case, communication is seen as a factor that determines the effectiveness of leadership (Derue et al., 2011; Morgeson et al., 2010; Bligh, Kohles, & Meindl, 2004).

According to Holladay and Coombs (1994) which showed that the content and delivery of a leader affect the followers' perception towards a leader. It is also consistent with the study conducted by McCroskey (1966) which indicated that the ways of communication play an important role in leadership. It is consistent with the study conducted by Studies conducted by Bennis and Nanus (1985); Conger and Kanungo, (1998); Locke, Kirkpatrick, Wheeler, Schneider, Niles, Goldstein, Welsh and Chah (1991) stated that leaders are able to create and disseminate messages to followers effectively through his or her effective personal communication skills; and different leaders use different ways to persuade their followers to accept their ideas (Bass 1985). Therefore, Conger and Kanungo (1998) stressed that in order to influence followers, a leader need to communicate his or her ideas effectively to his or her followers. Thus, it was evident that a good content and delivery of messages are needed to influence followers' attitude and behaviour which will contribute to social change or development.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Fairhurst (2014), also asserted that effective communication of a leader will significantly affect followers' perception

especially, in motivating them towards social change or development. Likewise, Northouse (2013) defined leadership as a process of influencing people to reach goals. Particularly, there are three key ideas that emerged from the leadership literature which defined leadership as a form of influence (Hersey & Blanchard, 1984), achievement of a common goal(s) (Bryman, 1992) and as symbolic, communicative behavior (Hackman & Johnson, 2013). In-line with the three ideas above, Hackman and Johnson (2013) define leadership as a human symbolic communication that is used to influence attitudes and behaviors of people to reach shared goals. Moreover, researchers have identified that effectiveness of leadership depends on the communication capability of the leader (Flauto, 1999). Therefore, it can be concluded that communication is the core principle of leadership (Vries, Bakker-Pieper, & Oostenveld, 2010). This shows that effective communication of a leader can motivate followers towards betterment. However, studies on majority and minority leadership communication are indeed limited. Consistent with the discussion, this study suspects that Mahathir's leadership communication played an important role in stimulating social change in Malaysia, specifically among Indians. In the earlier part of this study, the achievement of the Indians under the leadership of Mahathir was clearly discussed. Hence, this study aims to explore the characteristics of Mahathir's leadership communication in stimulating social change in the society, specifically among the Indians in Malaysia.

### **2.3 Leadership Communication and Social Change**

This section aims to discuss the link between leadership communication and social change. This section begins by exploring leadership communication in the context of social change. The basic idea of communication for social change can be seen clearly

in the work of Paulo Freire (1970), a Brazilian educator who perceives communication as a tool in creating cultural identity, trust, commitment, ownership and empowerment. Consistent with that, it was understood that communication is the main substance of leadership communication which leads to change (Barrett, 2014).

In general, communication and change process are strongly linked (Elving, 2005). According to McCall (2011), communication is a process of discussion between people which leads to social change in community. McCall (2011) highlighted that interpersonal communication between people which are in accordance with the cultural norms of the people determines the social change. Importantly, the communication process should be facilitated by a social change agent who triggers the social change in the community (Rogers & Kincaid, 1981). The communication process creates mutual understanding between people which provides empowerment and promotes participation among the members of community. The importance of communication during planned change were also discussed in literature (Lewis, 1999). It is understood that leadership and communication are embedded components and it is important for a leader to communicate effectively for changes to happen. This is because a weak leadership communication could result in gossips and resistance to change, leading to opposition to change (DiFonzo & Bordia, 1998); (Smeltzer & Zener, 1992). As evidence, based on the study conducted by Lewis (1999), effective communication will ensure a smooth change process in a society. Poor communication of a leader will result in ineffective social change (DiFonzo & Bordia, 1998); (Smeltzer & Zener, 1992). Therefore, it shows that leadership communication and the implementation of changes are interdependent. Paulo Freire (1983) also stressed on the importance of cultural identity and the participation of the

community in communication for social change. To support, in his study, Serveas (2008) has discussed that social change could only possible if there is a continuous communication which are relevant to the culture of the community. Serveas (2008) clearly indicated that there should be an effective communication between the social change provider and the community. Importantly, it was highlighted that the communication process should be socially and culturally relevant to the community.

In another study, Fraser and Restrepo-Estrada (1998) have indicated that social change is determined by two main factors which are the communication and people's participation. These two factors are crucial to encourage people's participation at all levels and enhance people's understanding towards social change. It also serves as a tool to strengthen the relationship between people, understand people's culture and the needs of the community. To support, sufficient studies highlighted that communication is the main component in the development process (Vaughan & Rogers 2000; Cohen 2000). Poole (2011) also argued that explicit communication acts of a leader provide followers a direction, purpose and identity to change. Therefore, it was an evident that effective leaders enact competent communicative behavior that consistent with the context to create social change in a community (Jablin, Cude, House, Lee, & Roth, 1994).

Hence, this study strongly assumes that Mahathir's communication could have a strong influence towards the social change among Indians in Malaysia. This situation is evident in the leadership communication of Mahathir as he does not only set visions to be achieved by Malaysians but also articulated his visions well. For instance, the introduction of Vision 2020 which was set by Mahathir aimed to turn Malaysia into a developed country by 2020 gave hope for the people to progress and

move forward. In a speech, Mahathir stressed that Malaysia should develop in all aspects, economically, politically, socially, spiritually, psychologically, culture and spirituality (Mohamad, 1991). This shows that Mahathir had set the goals for the nation, communicated them well with people and motivated the society to strive to achieve the vision which could transform Malaysia to a better level. Interestingly, Mahathir was a leader who represented the majority community (Malay) and he was often criticised for neglecting the minority communities, which includes the Indians. However, it was evident that the Indians in Malaysia have progressed in different sectors under the leadership of Mahathir. Therefore, this study assumes that Mahathir used his leadership communication skills to inform and persuade the Indians towards changes. Thus, this study aims to investigate the leadership communication between the majority (Malays) - minority (Indians) communities in Malaysia.

#### **2.4 Culture, Leadership Communication, and Culture Sensitivity**

As this study investigates Mahathir's leadership communication from the Indians cultural perspective, this section explores the link between leadership communication and culture. According to culture and leadership communication are bound together, and a leader who creates a culture will adapt to the culture (Schein, 1985). Therefore, culture is an on-going recreation of meaning and it is within an individual. This idea is consistent with the idea of leadership communication which refers to the process of creating meaning (Gardenswartz, Rowe, Digh, & Bennett, 2003)

A study by Bass (1997) found that leaders exhibit different behaviours when they are exposed to different cultures. To support the arguments, according to Singh and Krishnan (2007) leadership is classified as a social phenomenon, thus, leadership is relevant to be explored in cultural context. They also argued that leaders need to be

sensitive towards different cultural backgrounds of the followers in order to facilitate their needs and requirements (Singh & Krishnan, 2007). Hence, it is very important for leaders, especially transformational leaders to be able to change their behaviours according to the culture of their followers.

The ability to be sensitive towards different cultural is a very important component of leadership communication of a transformational leader. Hofstede (1980) stated that culture consists of different aspects and layered phenomenon within which “the collective programming of the human mind” occurs (Hofstede, 1980, p. 43). He identified the link between culture and work-related values. Further, in relation to transformational leadership, he discussed three major elements of transformational leadership; charisma, individualised consideration and intellectual stimulation, which could influence the culture of followers (Hofstede, 1983).

Besides, Ergeneli, Gohar and Temirbekova (2007) explored the relationship between transformational leadership and Hofstede’s cultural dimensions. Their findings strengthened the study conducted by Bass and Avolio (1993) and concluded that transformational leadership is applicable in various cultural contexts. Furthermore, leadership communication scholars also stated that a good understanding of followers’ culture is important for a leader to create a strong relationship and gain support from followers (Krishnan, 2002). Leaders also need to establish shared visions for the followers as a guiding principle, which means, a leader must be able to create a strong meaning for their followers (Bass, 1990). Thus, this study argues that Mahathir reflected transformational leadership qualities; he introduced and implemented visions and show high commitments in transforming Malaysians into a better society. In regard to that, Mahathir was perceived as a leader who was sensitive towards the

culture of his followers, including the Indians. As evidence, Saad (2012) stated that the cultural sensitivity among non-Muslims towards Muslims was good under the leadership of Mahathir.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Jung and Avolio (1999) comparing transformational and transactional leadership styles in a cross-cultural context. One of the recent studies related to culture and leadership was conducted by Pauliene (2012) stated that the cultural values of followers and leaders influence leadership communication process which emphasised on culture-specific behaviours. Scholars also have examined the relationship between types of culture and the effectiveness of leadership. For instance, Pauliene (2012) found that Australian and Turkish cultures also advocate for a cordial leader-follower relationship under a transformational leadership style. Transformational leaders are regarded as coordinators who promote a healthy environment among followers (Pauliene, 2012). It clearly indicates that cultural knowledge of leaders contributes to an effective leadership communication. In another study conducted by Markus and Kitayana (1991) stated that cultural factors affect the relationship between a leader and follower. Likewise, leadership prototypes and conceptions vary from one culture to another (Barrett, 2014), and they have dramatically brought different implications in different cultural contexts (Chemers & Ayman, 1993). It means a leader needs to understand and fulfill the cultural needs of his or her followers by persuading them towards goals. The cultural context in which a leader and followers interact strongly influences the communication process between a leader and his followers. However, interestingly literatures clearly indicated that only limited studies were conducted on leadership communication involving a majority and a minority community (Malay-Indian) relationship from

cultural perspective, particularly in a multi-ethnic and racial country such as Malaysia (Lynn-Sze & Ahmad, 2017; Yukl, 2006). Thus, the next section will be discussing the Indian culture and its link to leadership communication.

Since Hofstede's publication in 1980, the influence of culture on attitude and behaviours of individual gained attention from various researchers (Mohd.Yusoff, Roselina, & Syed Azizi, 2002). Hofstede identified many cultural dimensions and continued to replicate his study across many countries until 2010 with 76 researches on the topic (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). However, Hofstede treated Malaysian as a homogenous society by ignoring the different ethnic compositions (Hofstede, 1991) which made his study questionable. To counter his studies, some follow-up studies were conducted by local researchers showed that each ethnic group is diverse and unique (Mohd. Yusof et al., 2002).

To further understand the effects of culture on leadership communication process, literature related to the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness Research Program) study is explored. One of the questions that was investigated under the GLOBE Study was to what extent do the cultural forces influence the expectation of individuals on the leaders and their behaviours and to what extent will leadership study vary consistently with culturally specific values and expectations. In short, the GLOBE study focuses on the effects of cultures on the practice of leadership across cultures in the world. However, similar to Hofstede's studies, the 10-year research programme of (GLOBE) treated Malaysia as a homogenous country which neglected the cultural values hold by each ethnic group in the country. The GLOBE study assumed that there is no significant relationship

between the different ethnic groups in Malaysia (Kennedy, 2002). Triandis and Brislin (1984) stressed the importance of culturally inclusive research to expand related theories and seek in-depth knowledge in cultural context. Thus, Graen (2006) criticised that the GLOBE study has overlooked the cultural diversity element in the country. Consistent with the idea, more researches focusing on cultural difference between different ethnic groups have been conducted, such as Asma and Lim (2001) found that religious values of different ethnic groups creates a significant difference in attitude and behaviour between ethnic groups in Malaysia. This clearly indicates that the attitude and behaviour of people depends on their culture and so is leadership (Mohd. Yusof et al., 2002; Hofstede, 1991). Furthermore, cultural values significantly influence leadership process such as the preferred leadership style (Mohd. Yusof et al., 2002). Therefore, Dahlia (2008) encourages future researchers to conduct research to understand the cultural values between different cultural groups in Malaysia. Thus, the present study is unique as it aims to investigate leadership communication from the Indian cultural perspective.

## **2.5 Indian Culture as an Agent between Transformational Leadership Communication and Social Change**

In the previous sections, the link between leadership communication and social change, and, leadership communication and culture were explored. Culture contributes to the effectiveness of leadership communication because a good leadership happens when a leader meets the needs of his followers (House & Aditya, 1997). According to Bass (1997) and Barrett (2014) although transformational leadership communication is universal, in order to be transformational, a leader

should act according to cultural context. This is because culture influences the four components of transformational leadership communication which are manifested in a leader's behavior. For instance, a study by Ardichvili and Gasparishvili (2001) discussed that transformational leadership model was the most suitable in four USSR countries. Besides that, articulation of vision which is one the fundamental components of transformational leadership shown to be culturally related varying from public oratory skills in USA to public service by Mother Teresa in India (Smith & Peterson, 2002). Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) conceded that transformational leadership is authentic because it incorporates the cultural component which is the fundamental of leadership. Scholars such as Kanungo and Misra (2004); Khandwalla (1990), argued that transformational leadership communication is significant in developing countries such as India. This is because transformational leaders could address the needs of the follower and stimulate change in society by identifying the unique culture of the followers. Consistent with the idea, Singh and Bhandarker (1990) stated that the change in society by a leader would be successful when a leader is able to identify the cultural sensitivity in the society.

Relating to Indian culture and transformational leadership communication, according to Krishnan (2001), the Indian culture facilitates the development of transformational leadership communication. Hinduism is one of the oldest religions in the world existing for more than 5000 years and its contribution to this world in various fields of knowledge is remarkable. For instance, many ancient literatures such as the "Valmiki Ramayana", the "Mahabharata" (including the Bhagavad-Gita), and "Rig-Veda" provide leadership lessons that are relevant to be applied into modern context. Consistent with that, Panda and Gupta, (2007) also indicated that leadership studies should focus on development of specific leadership models, which revolve

around Indian cultural roots and values. Furthermore, researchers have attempted to explain the relationship between culture and leadership communication (Choong & Thomas, 1997; Leslie & Van Velsor, 1998). In addition, scholars, such as Chinmayanda (2003) stressed on the need to explore Indian culture in the context of modern times. In line with the idea, a study has been conducted by Muniapan (2007) which examined the relationship between transformational leadership and “Valmki Ramayana” (ancient Hindu literature).

Bhagavad-Gita is regarded as the key of Indian culture and it is the most influential Hindu text which provides guidelines of Vedic wisdom (Easwaran, 1985, Miller & Moser, 1986). Vedic wisdom is referring to the ancient Indian philosophy, traditions and practices. It was believed that the knowledge was revealed by God for humankind (Mehta, 2012). The Ramayana and Bhagavad-Gita provide a detailed discussion about human life, particularly on the ways a man should lead his life in this world. Both the Ramayana and Bhagavad-Gita contain noble moral teachings and principles of Hinduism, which offer many leadership lessons that are relevant in the modern context (Retrieved from <http://www.rsl.ukans.edu/pkanagar/divine/>).

As evidence, a study conducted by Engardio and McGregor (2006) stated that there are various leadership lessons found in Bhagavad-Gita and Ramayana and many top business schools in the United States have introduced “self-mastery classes” using Indian philosophies to improve students’ leadership communication skills. The Bhagavad-Gita is one of the oldest ancient texts in the world which consists of many leadership lessons. Initially, Bhagavad-Gita was originally written in Sanskrit and it was first translated in 1785. It was believed that the ancient text was taught and communicated orally since 3100 B.C.E (Hee, 2007). In summary, Bhagavad-Gita is a

text which involves discussion between prince Arjuna and his charioteer, Lord Krishna, a Hindu God in the form of human. The discussion occurred in the battlefield of Pandav's, which belongs to Arjuna and Kaurava's, which belongs to the opposition. On the battlefield, Arjuna refused to fight with the Kaurava because they are his relatives and questioned Lord Krishna on the need of the war. Thus, Lord Krishna explained the need for war and played his role to safeguard Dharma (righteousness). Bhagavad-Gita consists of eighteen chapters which covers three main parts; karma yoga or selfless action, Jnana yoga or self-knowledge, and Bhakti yoga or ways to love (Hee, 2007).

Bhagavad-Gita also discussed about people based on three attributes (Gunas); "sattva", "rajas" and "tamas" (Chinmayananda, 2003). According to Bhagavad-Gita, the intersections of these three attributes (Gunas) contribute to the creation of mental make-up of an individual which affects the attitude and behaviour of the individual. In general, "sattva guna" refers to the qualities of an individual who work for the harmoniousness and betterment of the people and they are self-less. They are sensitive to others' needs and work towards shared goals. Rajas refers to the qualities of an individual who only think for himself or herself aiming only at ego, fame, name and power. Tamas refers to the quality of an individual who are corrupted and driven by their personal interest, and willing to sacrifice others for his or her own selfish goals. The "sattva" attributes reflected by a leader is seen as ethical as they inspire followers which can result in the creation of positive perception among followers. Interestingly, according to Kejriwal and Krishnan (2004), "sattva guna" can be used to enhance transformational leadership and bring changes. In other words, it teaches how an

individual's or leader's should be in order to influence followers towards betterment. This lays the foundation for characteristics, attitudes and behaviours of a good leader.

Another study conducted by Rarick and Nickerson, (2008) stated that Bhagavad-Gita leadership lessons can be seen in a few general areas. First, it can be seen in the need of maintaining an individual's role and duties. It was clearly stated in the Bhagavad-Gita that perfection could be attained if a leader is diligent in his duty (Bhagavad-Gita 18:45). It was also stated that a leader's duty is also to influence others and he or she must be value-driven. Based on Bhagavad-Gita, the character of being true to oneself and the values held are the fundamental criterion of a leader. It was also stated that a leader should be a role model to followers as characters and practices of a leader will be a benchmark for the people (Bhagavad-Gita 3:21). Secondly, a leader should be proactive and wise in all situations (Bhagavad-Gita 3:4). For instance, in Bhagavad-Gita, Lord Krishna told Arjuna to combine his wisdom with right action which is vital for an effective leadership communication. Lord Krishna urged Arjuna to complete his duties by making a firm decision (Bhagavad-Gita 5:4). It was asserted in Bhagavad-Gita that a leader should act with great wisdom, especially when he or she faces difficult situations to make tough decisions. Third, self-sacrifice for the greater good. Bhagavad-Gita, it pointed that sacrifice is the noblest action (Bhagavad-Gita 3:14) and a leader should always act without thinking about self-gain and shows great concerns for his or her followers. It was also discussed that a leader needs to sacrifice his or her own interest for the sake of his or her community. The Bhagavad-Gita also identified the characteristics of good leadership; kind and compassionate, free from selfishness, humble, forgiving; and, accommodative (Bhagavad-Gita 12:13). It stresses that a leader should always act in a

way that benefits the followers and warns against the aim of attaining material gain. It also identified three main negativities that one should avoid; lust, extreme anger and greed. Consistent with that, in Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna advised Arjuna to play his role with great wisdom and not to focus on the results of his work. Based on the discussion, it was an evident that Indian culture provides leadership lessons that could be associated with modern leadership communication practices.

The discussion clearly indicated a strong influence of culture is an agent between leadership communication and social change. Indian culture clearly provides explanation on its influence towards the attitude and behaviour of followers. The present study perceived that Indian culture influences the mind of the Indians in most aspects of life, including their attitude and behaviour towards leaders. However, the discussion only focused on the Indian followers and therefore, this study aims to explore the influence of Indian culture in creating perception among Indians towards Mahathir's leadership communication. The theoretical basis of leadership communication between majority-minority communities from the cultural perspective is still underdeveloped (Avolio & Yammarino, 2002; Graen, 2006; Andreouli, 2013). Therefore, this study aims to bridge the gap by exploring the leadership communication between Mahathir who represents the majority community and Indians, the minority community from the Indians' perspective.

## **2.6 Leadership Communication Styles**

In general, there are four basic leadership styles. Firstly, is autocratic (authoritarian) leadership. It is a classical approach where the leader will retain decision making power as much as possible. In this type of leadership, a leader will make decision representing an entire group on his or her own. There will no input or suggestion

encouraged from the followers. An autocratic leader will make decision based on his or her observation and based on what he or she felt needed for the followers. The followers were expected to obey to the decisions made without a proper explanation from the leader. It also consists of a set of rewards and punishments (Dessler & Starke, 2004). It was found that autocratic leadership is has been extensively criticized as it leads to high turnover rate and absenteeism. Research indicated that Generation X highly resistant to autocratic leadership style. It is because autocratic leaders are associated with certain attributes such as highly depend on threats and punishments to influence employees, does not trust the employees and does not allow employee input.

Secondly is bureaucratic leadership style. It is a leadership style which depends on the policy or procedure. It is suitable when employees are doing the routine tasks, need to understand the standard of procedures, handling dangerous equipments and handling cash. This type of leadership was found to be time-consuming because it involves layers of procedures.

The third leadership style is democratic (participative) leadership. The democratic leaders who encourage the participation of followers in the decision-making process, however, retains the final say in making decision. The democratic leaders appeared to be more relaxed yet in-control approach to manage and lead followers. He or she encourages feedback or suggestions from the followers in dealing with issues before making a decision (Dessler & Starke, 2004). In general, democratic leadership develops plan to help employees evaluate their own performance, assist the employees to attain goals, recognises followers' achievements and stimulates growth of the employees. This leadership style is suitable to be practiced when dealing with high-skilled employees and during the operational change of an organisation.

The next leadership style is laissez-faire leadership. It is also known as hands-off style. This type of leadership assumes that followers are able to find a solution for the problem that they faced. Therefore, they provide a little guidance when dealing with group issues which allows them to make decisions on their own. Laissez-faire leadership encourages group problem-solving and critical thinking without much interference from the leaders. In short, it empowers the followers towards decision making. Laissez-faire is suitable to be practiced when dealing with highly skilled and experienced employees, external experts appointed, employees believe that the success was attained through their own effort and employees are trustworthy. Usually, in this type of leadership, the decisions were made without a lot of consideration (Dessler & Starke, 2004).

Lastly is transformational leadership. The transformational leader encourages his or her followers towards change by communicating to followers. This type of leadership involves the establishment of visions for the people and articulation of the vision to the people. This process stimulates followers to challenge the status quo and move forward to improve themselves. Therefore, transformational leaders are charismatic, confident and ethical, able to inspire followers, visionary and culturally sensitive. Bass and Avolio (2005) discussed the four dimensions of transformational leadership, which are reflecting the characteristics of transformational leadership. Firstly, transformational leader is charismatic, which is vital for the transformation process. It influences the followers towards the vision created by a leader to change. Secondly, transformational leader is able to motivate people to challenge their status quo by communicating a compelling vision for his or her followers. A transformational leader is not only able to establish vision for the people but also communicate them effectively.

Thirdly, transformational leader able to identify the needs of his followers and facilitate them accordingly. It is because transformational leaders are culturally sensitive and adaptive, they able to adapt their communication based on the environment. Lastly, transformational leader able to encourage people to think creatively. They always motivate followers to find new solutions for their problem. In short, this type of leadership style is very important for the development of people in a multicultural society. This is because transformational leader able to understand the culture his or her followers and establish visions consistent with the needs of followers and uphold high moral values which inspire and motivate people to change.

## **2.7 Mahathir's Transformational Leadership Communication**

This study perceives that Mahathir's leadership communication significantly reflected transformational leadership communication quality (Kark & Shamir, 2002). This is because transformational leaders can communicate effectively and influence their followers. They are also be a role model for their followers and in order to stimulate change, transformational leaders show high commitments in their work (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990). Past researches showed that transformational leaders enhance group cohesiveness by using persuasive and image-based rhetoric (Emrich, Brower, Feldman, & Garland, 2001). These ideas could be seen in the leadership communication of Mahathir. For instance, Mahathir developed 'Bangsa Malaysia' concept as the national identity of Malaysian which aims to foster unity among Malaysians and had showed high commitment to develop Malaysia.

To further understand the leadership communication qualities of Mahathir as a transformational leader, this section analyses the leadership communication actions of

Mahathir that could be associated with transformational qualities. Mahathir's leadership communication aimed to change Malaysians to be more productive and efficient. In order to achieve that, he put a lot effort. For instance, Mahathir established a new set of ethics to be followed by civil servants in addition to procedural codes of General Orders in Malaysia (Karim, 1988). The ethics were to nurture moral values and good attitude among civil servants beyond the General Orders that only focused on general work procedures. This effort is to foster a new culture among Malaysian which aimed to change Malaysians' attitude and behaviour that would encourage towards social change or betterment.

Furthermore, he also strongly believed in 'leadership by example'. Look East Policy was another important policy instituted by Mahathir during his premiership. In this policy, Japan and Korea were used as role models for economic success. Mahathir encouraged people to adapt the working culture of the Japanese and Koreans who were seen as more efficient and productive. This clearly shows that Mahathir set a clear vision for Malaysians and continuously motivated people to achieve the goals. Furthermore, literatures also stated that Mahathir's leadership communication was an important factor towards many successful reformations in Malaysia. His qualities as a charismatic leader motivated administrative reforms with least problems (Asia week 30 January, 1997).

Transformational leadership communication literatures discuss that leader with charisma foster inspirational motivation (Judge, Bono, Illies, & Gerhardt, 2002), set visions for the future (Sosik, 2005) and stimulate followers' confidence in achieving collective goals (Wilderom, van den Berg, & Wiersma, 2012). Thus, due to these powerful symbolic behaviors, followers tend to have great inspiration and

respect towards the leader (Waldman & Yammarino, 1999). Relating the qualities of transformational leadership communication to Mahathir's leadership communication, one can understand that as a leader, Mahathir introduced many visions and policies for Malaysians, provided ways to achieve the visions and motivated Malaysians to be successful. These qualities created a positive perception towards Mahathir as a transformational leader.

To further understand transformational leadership communication, Martin Luther King, Jr. can be used as one of the best examples. He motivated his followers by communicating organisation goals (Bass, & Avolio, 1994); (Stam, van Knippenberg, Wisse, 2010). Communication is an essential element in leadership communication to ensure followers are moving towards a same direction (Nemanich & Keller, 2007); (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). Leaders share visions through rhetoric which focuses on verbal and written forms (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991) and the message is focused on the establishment of vision and values (Venus, Stam, & van Knippenberg, 2013). Furthermore, vision-based research actually began from leadership studies. Therefore, a clear link between leadership communication and vision can be seen (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999); (Zaccaro & Bank, 2001). Thus, vision can be classified as a core element in ensuring effectiveness of leadership communication (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). Hence, this study perceived that Mahathir as a transformational leader who motivated followers towards change by communicating visions and sharing visions which were communicated using verbal and written forms.

This shows leader's transformational quality have a positive impact on followers' performance and studies showed that followers of transformational leaders

are happier than followers of non-transformational leader (Erez, Amir, Misangyi, Vilmos, Johnson, Diane, LePine, Marcie, Halverson, & Kent, 2008). This is because transformational leaders provide motivational visions which stimulate thinking of the followers to change for better (Base, 1985). Transformational leadership communication qualities can be seen when a leader shows implicit qualities such as charisma (e.g., inspiring, confident, strong sense of purpose, etc.) which indirectly affects his or her followers' behavior and attitude (Howell & Shamir, 2005; Markus & Zajonc, 1985). Thus, followers who perceive a leader as inspiring will support his ideas and visions (DeGoot, Kiker, & Cross, 2000; Howell & Shamir, 2005). Thus, this study views Mahathir as a transformational leader who was able to inspire and motivate people towards social change. However, it was evident that limited studies discussed Mahathir's leadership communication from the minority community's perspective, specifically the Indians.

## **2.8 Leadership communication between majority-minority community**

Northouse (2010) asserted that globalisation has been extensively contributed to the social change. This is because globalisation encourages people from different cultures to communicate and cooperate in various fields. For instance, Northouse (2010) added that people are more interconnected through different aspects such as international trade, cultural exchange and use of telecommunication systems which stimulates the communication process between people from different culture. Therefore, he indicated the need of understanding intercultural communication which influences the social change process among people. Hence, it very important for a leader to embrace the diversity of a multicultural society to ensure he or she able to provide a significant change in the society (House & Javidan, 2004).

Based on the cross-cultural researches, it showed that components such as trust, empathy, transformation, power and communication have become an important component of leadership (Grisham, 2006; Goleman, 2002). Goleman discussed the importance of a leader to possess cultural knowledge, understanding and sensitivity towards other culture, especially in a multicultural environment to create change in the society. In a different study, Grisham (2006) indicated that effective leadership communication is needed to understand others' behaviour and attitude. For instance, a leader should possess high cultural intelligence to understand others' culture and facilitate their needs accordingly.

Consistent with the argument, Adler and Bartholomew (1992) indicated the need of good intercultural communication sensitivity for a leader to manage the diversity of his or her followers, specifically in a multicultural environment. It was pointed out that a leader should not be ethnocentric and perceives his or her culture is superior to others. Along with this idea Ting-Toomey (1999) explained that a leader should develop visions that acceptable by all his or her followers from different cultural groups. To ensure the visions are acceptable by all, a leader should possess effective leadership communication skills.

Northouse (2010) also points out that a leader should not be an ethnocentric and prejudice and it were found to be the barriers to effective leadership. It was found that being ethnocentric affects the followers' perception towards a leader. Therefore, it is evident that a leader needs to be culturally sensitive to build a positive relationship with his or her followers and make him or her acceptable in a multicultural environment (Grisham, 2006). According to Matveev and Nelson (2004) a leader needs good intercultural communication skills to manage the challenges and leads to

effective changes in the society. They have indicated that intercultural communication comprises of relationship skills, communication skills, individual attributes, affective and behavioural skills such as empathy, culturally sensitive and manage anxiety (Congden et al. 2009).

According to the social identity approach, leadership is enacted within the context of a shared group membership (e.g., Hogg, 2001; van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, de Cremer, & Hogg, 2005). This means that characteristics of the leader as an in-group member will have an impact on his or her effectiveness in influencing and mobilizing followers. A leader characteristic that enhances leadership effectiveness is in-group prototypicality (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). A prototypical leader is influential because he or she exemplifies the shared social identity. The attributes that make a person prototypical depend on the particular meaning of the in-group, which depends on specific group comparisons. This means that leaders can actively invoke a self-image as a prototypical group member by defining a shared identity within a particular intergroup context (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001).

According to Hogg (2001), leadership is a collective interaction between a leader and a group of followers which occur in a social context. A leader and followers were perceived as members of a group. Therefore, the leadership attributes of a leader has a great impact on the attitude and behaviour of followers. In short, a leader's attributes determine the effectiveness of the leadership interaction between leader and follower. In a multicultural environment, a leader actively stimulates and shapes the attitude and behaviour of his or her follower Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). Literatures proved that in order for a leader to be accepted by his or her followers, he or she needs to be a

leader for everyone. In short, he or she should embrace the diversity of his or her followers (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003).

In addition, Mummendey and Wenzel (1999), a leader needs to embrace the differences of his or her followers, especially in a multicultural environment which consist of majority-minority communities. This is because when leaders who represent a majority community embrace the differences of his or her followers, it has a great impact on the minority group compared to the majority. It is because from the majority point of view, the leader is representing who they are and from the minority perspective, it shows that leader approves the differences of the minority group (Wenzel, Mummendey, Weber, & Waldzus, 2003). Specifically, it a need for a leader who is from the majority community also lead the majority community to practice tolerance as a way to embrace the diversity of the society he or she leads which leads to social change (Lee, 2013). Martin, Thomas, Hewstone, & Gardikiotis (2018) also strongly asserted that a leader who culturally sensitive would stimulate creativity and innovation among his or her followers. It means a leader who embraces diversity will make use of the potentials of different cultural groups to enhance the vitality of the group. This improves the leadership communication between a leader and followers which leads to social change in the society, including among the minority community (Mill, 2001; Nemeth, 1986). In accordance to the discussion above, it was assumed that Mahathir's leadership communication embraces the cultural differences between Malaysians including the Indians which influence their attitude and behaviour to change.

## **2.9 Mahathir's leadership communication and Impact on Indian Community**

In Malaysia, leadership has always been a topic of discussion and Mahathir as a prominent leader not only in Malaysia but also at international level has always become an example. Based on literature reviews, it showed that Malaysia has succeeded in many sectors. Malaysia has shown economic growth which is not practical without effective leadership communication of Mahathir. Tarmizi Taher (2005) stated that the younger generations should always learn from the past leadership in directing Malaysia towards success. This assertion reflects Mahathir's vision to transform Malaysia in various fields. The present study argues that a nation's success relies upon leadership communication skills of a leader. According to Spinks, Wells, and Meche (1999), leadership communication is a core principle of the effectiveness of an organisation. This is because leaders who unite followers in achieving goals are perceived as role models. Thus, in such situation, a leader needs to provide a clear guidance to their followers (Yusof, 2002). In this sense, Mahathir showed his leadership communication qualities through his ideas, vision and policies that he introduced. Mahathir believed that universalism ideas could affect the identity of Malaysian culture and religious values held by Malaysians (Mahathir & Ishihara, 1995). To preserve Malaysian values, Mahathir launched "Look East" policy in 1982 which was aimed to prevent the influence of Western culture (Khoo, 1995). Past researches showed that Mahathir has exhibited high determination to transform Malaysia. His leadership communication capability is reflected when he justified the policies which were implemented during his premiership. For example, during the implementation of Privatization Policy, Mahathir explained, "previously, we tried to have a single [national] entity, but it caused a lot of tension and suspicion among the

people because they thought the government was trying to create a hybrid" (Straits Times, 1995). This situation reflects Mahathir's effort to defend the implementation of the policy by explaining its importance to the people.

In order to understand Mahathir's leadership communication, this section examines studies related to Mahathir. One of the studies related to Mahathir focused on "Mahathirism". According to Milne and Mauzy (1999) Mahathirism is a process of providing rationalisation for all actions to stimulate satisfaction and understanding among followers. This is evident in communication process between Mahathir and his followers. During his premiership, Mahathir urged Malaysians to safeguard or preserve Asian values based on Malay-Islamic culture. He also urged Malaysians to preserve "Malayness"; feudalism, Islam, and "adat" (traditional customs). Consistent with the idea, in his book "*The Malay Dilemma*", he highlighted the stigma in Malay community to create awareness among Malays on the areas they lack and motivated them to overcome them (Barr, 2002). In general, Mahathir has initiated the concepts of Asian values due to international democratisation, extensive economy activities and political stability in 1990s, before the economic turmoil in July 1997 which affected most Asian countries (Naisbitt, 1997; Innoguchi & Newman, 1997). This shows that Mahathir has a rationale for each of his action and had communicated his decisions well to the people. Consistent with the idea, literatures highlighted that the core ideas of Mahathir's leadership approach were authoritative, but at the same time importance was given to close relationship-based community.

In February 1991, 'Wawasan 2020' (Vision 2020) was introduced by Mahathir to ensure a better future for Malaysia. Mahathir also emphasized on the notion of 'Bangsa Malaysia' which was aimed to establish a common identity for all

Malaysians (Hassan, 2005). Mahathir put effort in establishing vision, guiding and motivating Malaysians to achieve the visions. To further discuss, the notion of 'Bangsa Malaysia' which was a part of Vision 2020 was seen as a step to foster unity among Malaysians. Mahathir tried to create a stronger bonding among Malaysians and shared the same identity regardless of different ethnic groups. This is a significant step taken by Mahathir to create a harmonious environment in Malaysia by avoiding conflicts between ethnic groups. Thus, it shows that he tried to create a united Malaysian. It is very clear that Mahathir's efforts attempted to reduce the racial gap between Malaysians and foster unity by communication vision effectively to all.

In a speech in 1992, Mahathir highlighted two steps for the process of national building. One, he promised to fulfill his moral duties for the people. Two, he assured to rectify the socio-economic imbalance among ethnic groups. Mahathir assured his people that mother tongues of each ethnic groups will be preserved (The Star, 11 September 1995). Thus, Mahathir's leadership communication clearly shows that his ideas, policies and vision were well transmitted and communicated with people. Interestingly, the two elements highlighted above by Mahathir (1992) strongly can be associated to the discussion of Indian culture which emphasizes on the moral duties and role of a leader in accommodating the needs of the people.

Although Mahathir's leadership communication contributed to tremendous development in Malaysia, however his leadership communication was criticised for only focusing on the majority group that he represented. In his book "The Malaysian Indian Dilemma" written by Raman (2009) clearly stated that the Indian community was affected the most under the leadership communication of Mahathir. It was pointed out that Malay hegemony and biased policies affected the minority groups in

Malaysia, specifically the Indians in various sectors, including politics, economy and social. As evident it was discussed that in the political aspect, the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) failed to play an important role in developing Indian community. Eventually, it became a powerless party and depended on United Malay National Organization (UMNO) which was led by Mahathir. In other words, it can be said that MIC depended on a Malay party, UMNO in order to help the Indian community. In the economy aspect, the Indians were unable to progress due to unfair government policies which neglected the Indian community (Raman, 2009). Furthermore, under the implementation of New Economic Plan (NEP), Indian students faced difficulties to get a place in local universities and the situation became worse after the change from quota system to merit system which saw the Indian students intake to university dropped from 5%-6% to 5%. It was clearly indicated in Raman (2009) that Mahathir's premiership has created the most social and cultural problems for Indians. It was identified that there was no allocation given to Tamil schools although requests were made to the government. Besides that, the Islamisation Policy caused dissatisfaction among Indians as it heightened religion and cultural worries among non-Muslims including the Indians. Furthermore, many temples were relocated and demolished. The discussion clearly explained the situation of Indians in Malaysia who were sidelined in various aspects. Besides, it was also found that, even after the implementation of National Development Policy (NDP), the Indian community still did not receive fair economic opportunity as promised and the ethnic-oriented policy becomes incoherent under the leadership communication of Mahathir. For instance, in terms of economy, the idea of National Economy Policy (NEP) which initially incorporated national ideals of equality and justice, later on contradicted with the national policy it propagated (Chakraborty, 1996).

Through NEP and NDP, the idea of “Bumiputeraism” was institutionalised strongly and provided economic autonomy to Malays. Two-thirds of Indians in Malaysia remained as poor labourers; meanwhile one-fifth reached middle class standing, while only 10 percent were professionals and entrepreneurs as a result of NDP and NEP policies. Although Indian professionals are increasing in numbers, but their position in other sectors shows decrement. Furthermore, education opportunity access for Indian students were relatively less compared to other races, and Malaysian Indians remained vulnerable in terms of poverty, alleviation, income, social status, equity ownership and education. The Indians were neglected and sidelined due to the implementation of ethnic based policies (Chakarborty, 2004).

According to Ramachandran, the Founder of Hindu Rights Action Force (HINDRAF), Indians are the most affected community due to the implementation of ethnic-based policies which causes marginalisation of Malaysia’s minority groups. A senior second-generation delegate spoke in the 6th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) 2008 which was held at New Delhi that Islamisation could lead to marginalisation of Indians (10th January 2008, Times of India). Since the premiership of Mahathir in 1981, Islamisation was reflected in all his leadership communication both in domestic and foreign relations.

In general, although the Indians show progress in various fields, it is undeniable that Mahathir’s leadership communication also has contributed to enormous issues affecting the Indian community. Firstly, the marginalisation of Indians which caused dissatisfaction among Indians and it became deeper after the premiership of Mahathir. The dissatisfaction can be seen in the more obvious manner from the reaction of Malaysian Indians during the leadership communication of fifth

Prime Minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and the sixth Prime Minister, Najib Razak. After Mahathir stepped down as the 4th Prime Minister, the Indian community protested against the policies of the government through the Hindu Rights Action Force (HINDRAF) rally. HINDRAF was a coalition of 30 Hindu nongovernmental organisations which aimed to safeguard Hindu community rights in Malaysia (Cangi, 2014). On November 25, 2007, a group of Commission in Kuala Lumpur to hand over a 100,000 signature memorandum to the British Embassy. The memorandum was a petition to Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom to appoint a Queen's Counsel representing marginalised Malaysian Indians. Syed Husin (2008) stated that the factor that contributed to HINDRAF rally was actually dissatisfaction among the Indian community against the policies of the ruling class, which consists of Malays. This particular rally can be classified as a significant incident because it was one of the biggest rallies in Malaysian history which attracted both local and international media attention HINDRAF supporters held a demonstration and gathered outside British High. Another significant issue that affected the Indians was the Hindu temples demolition. Several temples in Malaysia were demolished by the government which caused stir and chaotic situations among the Indians in Malaysia. This situation was associated with the implementation of Islamisation Policy which caused worries among the non-Muslims. The Indian community in Malaysia blamed that the government did not look into the matter seriously nor tried to solve it. They felt that their rights in Malaysia were not protected by the leaders of the nation (Bukhari, 2006).

Moreover, there were also issues related to violations of human rights of Indians in Malaysia. It was stated that the Muslim leaders and politicians in Malaysia

had violated the rights of the minority Indians. In fact, any steps or actions to defend the human rights of the minorities ended up in failure (Raman, 2009). Therefore, this study is important to explore the responses of Indians towards the influence of Mahathir's leadership communication.

## **2.10 Transformational Leadership Theory**

Transformational leadership theory gained significant attention from various researchers since 1980s and it has been identified as one the most researched theories in leadership study (Diaz-Saena, 2011). The concept of transformational leadership was introduced by James Macgregor Burns in 1978 in his descriptive research on political leaders (Jung & Sosik, 2002). In a book titled 'Leaders' written by Bennis and Nanus (1985), it discusses transformational leadership by focusing on the concept of being charismatic, moral power and visionary leadership that could lead to positive outcomes for followers (Northouse, 2010). Realising the uniqueness of transformational leadership which is the motivating factor that influences followers' mind and behavior, many scholars have applied it in their researches (Ergenitel et al., 2007).

Initially, transformational leadership was introduced by Downton (1973) (in Northouse, 2010). In 1978, it was further researched by Burns in his study titled 'Leadership'. Burns (1978) described the quality of a leader as an individual who is able to encourage his or her followers to reach collective goals. The transformational leadership theory was also discussed thoroughly in House's studies which focused on charismatic leadership. This theory explained that charismatic leaders have certain

characters that contribute to charismatic effects on the followers. Further, Weber (1947) also proposed that charisma is not entirely a trait of a leader, but it is authenticated by followers from the way they perceive their leaders. Thus, this theory perceived that being charismatic and motivational are the qualities of a transformational leader.

In the late 1980s, the transformational and charismatic leadership theories were popular among many theorists including Bass (1985). According to Northouse (2001), transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms individuals. Robbins and Coulter (2007) view transformational leader as an individual who could stimulate and encourage followers to achieve certain goals. Consistent with the idea, Barrett (2014) and Warrilow (2012) explained that transformational leadership theory is about creating a positive change among followers and moving forward collectively.

Barrett (2014) and Warrilow (2012) explained the four components or qualities of transformational leadership which can bring development. The first quality is charisma or idealised influence which refers to the way a leader projects himself among his followers and the ability of the leader to be a role model for his followers. The second quality is inspirational motivation which refers to the action of articulating visions, missions and goals effectively for the development of an organisation or nation and the ability to inspire followers towards goals. The third component is intellectual stimulation, which refers to the quality of a leader who challenges the status quo and stimulates and encourages creativity in the followers. And finally, the fourth quality is personal and individual attention, which refers to the ability of a leader to attend to the needs of his followers and act as a mentor which

inspires followers towards improvements. Based on the discussion of the four main components of transformational leadership, it provides an understanding about the qualities of a leader who could bring development to the society.

Scholars such as Singh and Bhandarker (1990) discussed that transformational leadership are varied across culture. They stated that transformational leadership communication of a leader must be consistent with the intercultural communication sensitivity of his or her followers. They asserted that a transformational leader would be able to stimulate social change when their leadership communication is consistent with the culture of his or her followers. However, it was found that transformational leadership theory treated society as homogenous and the multicultural context is yet to be fully explored (Mhatre & Riggio, 2014; Yukl 2006; van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013; Ayman & Korabik, 2010), particularly in Malaysia. How culture would mediate transformational leadership and social change will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Based on the discussion above, it is understood that transformational leadership theory neglected the multicultural aspect of a leader and followers involved. It was identified that the quality of being motivational and having better intercultural communication sensitivity are the keys of transformational leadership communication in order to improve or transform followers towards certain goals or vision, however, most studies failed to discuss leadership communication from multicultural context. Thus, this study used transformational leadership theory as the basis of the interaction between Mahathir and the Indian community to fill up the gap of the theory.

### **2.10.1 Transforming leadership**

To further understand about transforming leadership, this section investigates literatures related to the theory. According to Burns (1978), transforming leadership is a process of a leader and his followers motivate each other to higher levels of motivation and mortality. Further, literatures also indicate that in order to motivate followers, a transforming leader will engage in establishing positive relationship with followers. Burns (1978) also asserted that this is possible because transforming leaders are good in understanding followers' needs and facilitate them according to their needs. In other words, transforming leaders communicate with their followers based on collective goals. Furthermore, Burns (1978) also stated that transforming leaders are based on general ethical principles. Therefore, they always recognize the needs of their followers and solve conflicts.

### **2.10.2 Transformational Leadership**

Bass (1985, 1996) built upon Burn's (1978) original ideas of transforming leadership. He studied the theory and called his revised theory as transformational leadership. He pointed out a clear difference between transforming and transformational. Transforming leadership focuses on social reformation by stimulating followers' values and needs while transformational leadership focuses on attaining goals (Yukl, 2006). Transformational leaders tend to engage in specific behaviours to motivate followers towards goals. Bass (1985) stated that transformational leader will make followers understand the importance of achieving goals, motivate followers to work for collective goals more than individual goals and encourage followers towards betterment. Thus, such behaviors will create confidence and trust among followers towards the leader. Specifically, transformational leaders will aim to change situations

by communicating problems with followers and establishing visions for followers, specifically by reflecting the four main leadership qualities; idealised influence, individualised consideration, inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation (Bass, 1997). Consistent with the idea, Barrett (2014) and Fairhurst (2011) transformational leadership communication leads to effective changes. Therefore, this study perceived Mahathir as a transformational leader who leads the Indians towards social change and aims to investigate Mahathir's leadership communication from the Indians cultural perspective.

### **3.11 Post Industrial Leadership**

This section will discuss leadership communication from post-industrial paradigm. Investigating leadership communication from post-industrial is very important because it focuses on followers' perspective. According to Rost (1993), the industrial paradigm of leadership theory has shifted to postindustrial paradigm. Initially, the basic ideas of leadership in the industrial paradigm were more focused on leaders' perspective and actions. In industrial paradigm, followers had no link with leadership and are perceived as unresponsive. However, after an extensive review, Rost (1993) compared the industrial paradigm of leadership communication with postindustrial age, which focused on relationship based and non-coercive interaction between leaders and followers who aim to achieve goals. Thus, Rost (1993) redefined leadership communication as a process of leaders and followers influencing one another towards shared goals. Postindustrial perspective has outlined four main components of leadership communication which are, relationships based on influence, leaders and followers as informants in the relationship; leaders and followers work together towards real changes and leader-followers aim have shared goals. This

paradigm discusses that leadership communication is a process of creating and maintaining relationship between a leader and his followers. Thus, this discussion is relevant to transformational leadership communication which emphasises that a leader should possess qualities that is acceptable by his or her followers. In short, in this paradigm, followers are viewed as individuals who actively involved in the leadership communication process. It means followers are equally important as a leader in a leadership communication process (Rost, 1993). Furthermore, this paradigm also explains that leaders and followers are work together towards purposeful and desired changes in a society. This paradigm focuses on the leadership communication process rather than the outcome of the process. Lastly, the postindustrial paradigm of leadership communication also focuses on shared purpose and intends real change, thus leaders and followers are interdependent. It is indicated that the followers need to play an active role in achieving mutual goals. In conclusion, this paradigm provides an understanding about the importance of conducting this study from the followers' perspective. Consistent with the discussion, this study seeks to explore leadership communication of Mahathir from Indians' point of view.

### **3.12 The effects of transformational leadership communication**

To show the significance of transformational leadership theory, this section discusses the effects of the leadership communication. Various studies stressed that transformational leadership brings changes and transforms individuals, organisations and communities. As evidence, a study conducted by Boga and Ensari, (2009) investigated the factors that contributes to organisational change, which are transformational leadership and organisational performance. The scholar identified that transformational leadership has the most significant impact on organisational

performance and contributes towards development. The transformational leaders also brings positive changes in organisational culture (Zagorsek, Dimovski, & Skerlavaj, 2009) through leadership qualities such as charisma and by encouraging creativity among followers (Paulsen, Maldonado, Callen, & Ayoko, 2009).

At an individual level, a transformational leader able to cultivate followers' interest towards the visions set by the leader. This indicates that positive relationship with transformational leaders will bring positive changes in a person's behavior. It also has been linked to different outcomes in organisation, such as, organisational commitment among employees (Barling, Weber, & Kelloway, 1996), workplace satisfaction, which includes satisfaction with the leadership of an organisation (Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996). It is evidence that transformational leader is able to motivate and inspire followers towards change (Hinduan, Wilson, Moss, & Scannell, 2009). Thus, the importance of transformational leadership qualities serves as a basis in the study. This study assumes Mahathir as a transformational leader, and his leadership communication qualities might have influenced the attitude and behaviour of Indians in Malaysia towards change.

### **3.13 The Importance of TLT in Bringing Social Change in Society**

Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT) emphasises more on the needs of the followers than the leader (Bass, 1999). TLT also stresses on high moral values of a leader who consistently encourage and think about the needs of his followers (Avolio & Bass, 1987; Bass, 1998; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Barrett, 2014). According to Bass (1990), through the moral values showed by transformational leaders in their daily life, they are able to inspire and motivate higher than the ordinary levels of commitment and motivation in followers. It was stated that transformational leader has the ability

to articulate inspiring visions which are attainable to the followers. It also builds confidence and trust in the leader. Thus, transformational leader is viewed as a charismatic leader. Besides inspiration, the second component of TLT refers to the leaders' ability to inspire his or her followers through effective communication by having good verbal and nonverbal communication and persuasive images to further motivate followers (Bass & Avolio, 1993). Thirdly, intellectual stimulation refers to leaders' ability to encourage creativity among followers or to think proactively. This component could also be associated with problem solving skill or innovation. And finally, individualised consideration refers to the ability of a leader to train followers towards shared goals. In regard to that, a leader is viewed as a mentor who provides guidance to his followers to attain goals (Bass, 1998). Based on TLT, it is evident that the components highlighted were aimed to bring social change or development among followers through certain qualities of a leader. However, TLT was still underdeveloped in the context of leadership communication of majority-minority communities relationship. Therefore, this study viewed TLT as relevant to be applied to explore Mahathir's leadership communication from the Indians cultural perspective. The present study views Mahathir as a leader who possesses transformational leadership qualities that influenced the Indian community in Malaysia towards social change.

### **3.14 Transformational leadership characteristics in Indian Culture**

The characteristics of transformational leadership were clearly exhibited in the Hindu ancient literatures such as in the "Ramayana", "Bhagavad-Gita" and "Bala Kanda". It is notable that the transformational leadership communication characteristics were exhibited in Ramayana through the main character of the epic, Sri

Rama before the establishment of the transformational leadership model by Burns (1978) and later by Bass and Avolio (1994). As evidence, in the book “Bala Kanda”, the character of Sri Rama was classified as intelligent, rationale, concerned about welfare of others, safeguards people, a true practitioner of the principles of religion, determined, brave, and loved by everyone. These characteristics have made people in Ayodhya to admire and get inspired by their leader, Sri Rama (Muniapan, 2007). The characteristics highlighted were consistent with the previous discussion on transformational leaders.

Tichy and Devanna (1990) who conducted extensive studies on transformational leadership listed out seven characteristics of transformational leaders. Firstly, transformational leaders are change agents who aim to bring the society and country towards betterment by stimulating changes in their follower’s attitude and behaviour. For instance, in the Ramayana, Sugriva was a transformed person after meeting Sri Rama. The transformation came as Sugriva became the king of Kishkinda after Sri Rama slained Vali, brother of Sugriva. In another circumstance, Sri Rama also contributed to the change of kinship of Lanka before war against Ravana.

Secondly, transformational leaders are courageous people. They are risk takers and make sure that their visions and goals are achieved. In Ramayana, Sri Rama reflected risk taking character when he kept the promise he made to his father. Although he was persuaded by his brothers and the people to breach the promise, he was very firm and brave in his decision.

Thirdly, transformational leaders believe in people. He or she practices positive approach and believe that there is a lot potential in people who require motivation and empowerment. In Ramayana, Sri Rama believed that Hanuman will

manage to find his wife, Sita and he confidently gave his ring to Hanuman and requested him to give it to Sita when he meets her.

Next, transformational leaders are value driven. There is a set of values that guide the actions of transformational leaders. In Ramayana, Sri Rama never breaks his promises throughout his reign. He told Sita that he is willing to give up his life to protect the sages who lived in Dandaka forest as he had already promised them.

Transformational leaders are lifelong learners who do continuous self-learning and development. They view mistakes as experience. In Ramayana, Sri Rama received lessons from sages such as Vasistha Muni, latter with Visvamitra Muni, Bharadvaja Muni, Jabali Muni, Atri Muni, etc during his childhood. He used the learning process to attain wisdom to be a leader of Ayodhya.

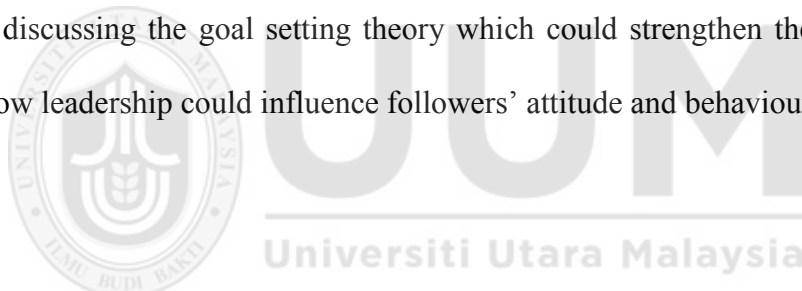
Transformational leaders also have the ability to deal with complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty. In other words, it refers to the problem-solving skills. In Bhagavad-Gita 3.21, Sri Krishna told Arjuna that a leader should be a role model for his or her followers (Muniapan, 2007). While in Ramayana, Sri Rama took a strong decision to banish Sita from Ayodhya. Although it was a harsh decision, Sri Rama made the decision by putting aside his personal interest to uphold the honor of his kingdom.

Transformational leaders are visionaries. For instance, Sri Rama introduced visions for Ayodhya and communicated them to his people before he went to jungle. In summary, it could be concluded that transformational leadership ideas were discussed in Indian culture. The ancient Hindu literatures provided the idea of a leader, and leadership communication, and characteristics of a leader which indirectly created

a perception in the mind of the Indians about good leadership communication. In addition, this study investigates Mahathir's leadership communication in association with the leadership communication lessons found in the Hindu ancient literatures. Therefore, it was perceived that exploring Mahathir's leadership communication from the Indians perspective provides a new dimension to leadership communication from the Indians perspective and in majority-minority community relationship (Malay-Indian).

### **Theories of Leadership That Relate to Transformational Leadership**

Although this research is grounded on transformational leadership theory, this section will be discussing other theories related to transformational leadership. This section will be discussing the goal setting theory which could strengthen the understanding about how leadership could influence followers' attitude and behaviour towards goals.



#### **3.15 Communication Accommodation Theory**

Another important theory that could explain the role of culture in facilitating leadership communication and social change is Communication Accommodation Theory. The theory highlights two important types of communication strategies which are important when interacting with people. First, convergence which refers to communication strategy of an individual who adapt to communication behaviour in accordance to a group of people (Giles & Ogay, 2007). For instance, changing communication style to match the audience. This provides an idea of adjusting communication behaviour to facilitate the need of a group of people. Relating to this study, it highlights the need of adapting different communication style in a

multicultural environment. Second, divergence which is a communication strategy to facilitate the differences between one individual and another. From the inter-ethnic context, an individual might need to use a suitable dialect while communicating with a specific audience (Giles & Ogay, 2007). This communication strategy helps to manage the differences between people. Specifically, this theory focuses on the way an individual should adjust his or her communication behaviour while interacting with others. This is perceived as an important component in a multicultural interaction to influence and establish positive relationship with people. In terms of multicultural context, this theory lays the foundation of how intercultural communication sensitivity between a leader and followers from different culture plays an important role in facilitating the social change among followers such as Malays and Indians in Malaysia. This theory provides some understanding on the importance of the intercultural communication sensitivity between a leader and followers. This shows that a leader embraces the differences of his or her followers. However, this theory focused on the communication behaviour of a leader and neglected the followers' cultural perspective. In short, this theory explains that leadership communication of a leader should address the intercultural communication sensitivity in order to stimulate change among his or her followers (Giles & Coupland, 1991). Therefore, this study focused on the people's perspective towards the leadership communication of a leader to stimulate social change.

### **3.16 Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework of this study is based on; Transformational Leadership Theory developed by Burns (1978) and Indian culture (Vedanta Philosophy), and supported by Communication Accommodation Theory.

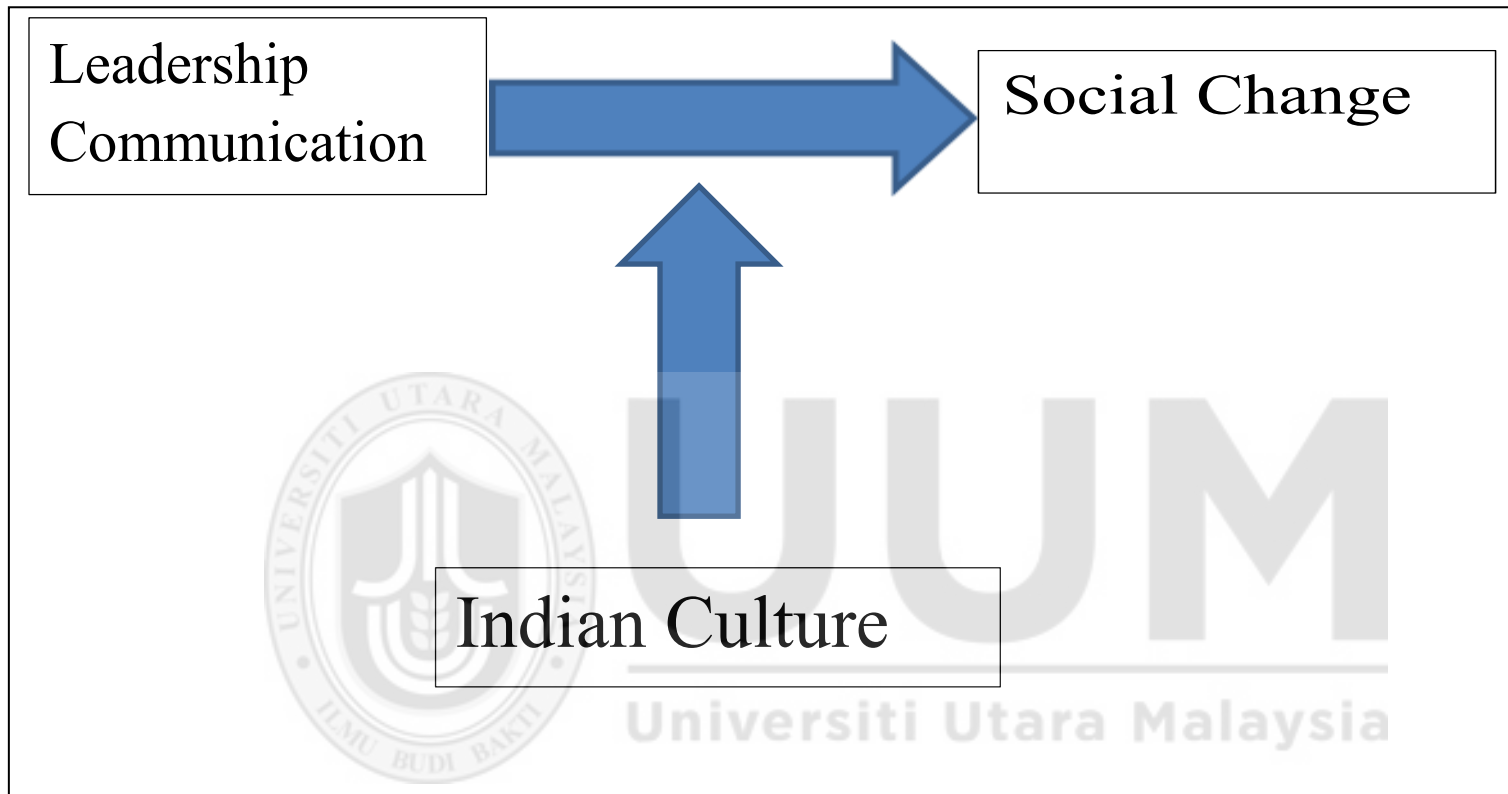
Transformational Leadership Theory discusses the qualities of a leader in transforming society or a nation towards betterment which should be consistent with the culture of his or her followers. Ancient Indian literatures provide understanding about leaders, leadership and the Indian values that influence perception of followers towards leaders. Communication Accommodation Theory also highlights the importance of adjusting communication behaviour according to the needs of the people. The conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure. 3.16.

Literatures discussed that the positive effects of transformational leadership is reflected on followers attitude and behaviour (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003; Bono & Judge, 2003; de Vries, Bakker-Pieper, & Oostenveld, 2010; Hackman & Johnson, 2013; Barrett, 2014), however, the practices of transformational leadership communication in the relationship of the majority and minority community in the multicultural context was neglected (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013; Lynn-Sze, Yusof & Ahmad, 2014). Scholars are also encouraged to conduct more researches related to transformational leadership in different communication context, such as cultural context (Avolio & Yammarino, 2002; Dumdum, Lowe, & Avolio, 2002).

Culture is identified as another important element of leadership communication. A study conducted by Markus and Kitayama (1991) stated that culture is an element that affects the basic components of leadership relations. Likewise, leadership ideas and models were altered according to environment (Bass, 1990), and they have different significant impact in different cultural contexts (Ensaria & Murphy, 2003). To further support the idea, leadership scholars agreed that there is a strong relationship between culture and leadership communication. For

instance, Jackson (2004) argued that culture affects leadership communication process. According to Chhokar, Brodbeck, and House (2007), cultural values held by members of the community determine their acceptance towards a leader. Although, Hindu ancient literatures provided an explanation about transformational leaders as an individual who can bring changes in the society and nation, however, empirical research examining leadership communication from the viewpoint of the Indian culture is never been researched. In regards of that, this study assumes that culture of a society and leadership communication qualities of a leader could contribute to social change. Thus, Indian culture believed to be relevant in exploring leadership communication of Mahathir in Malaysia.





*Figure 3.16* Leadership communication for social change based on Indian Culture

### **3.17 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study aims to get an insight of Mahathir's leadership communication towards social change from the Indians cultural perspective. Two ancient Indian literatures; "Valmki Ramayana" and "Bhagavad-Gita" will be examined to understand values and principles leadership in Indian culture. Furthermore, Indian leadership communication model which is accepted by the Indians in Malaysia will be developed. The next chapter will be discussing about the methodology applied in this study.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This section provides the explanation of research design which includes the rationale for qualitative study, the role of the researcher and the selection process of the informants involved in the study. The following section explicates the data collection, management and analysis to which the present study adhered.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative research design because it provides a perspective on a specific situation and offers detailed description which shows the ability of a researcher to describe the phenomenon under study (Myers, 2002). Moreover, this study posited that qualitative methods enable research studies to capture the complexity of leadership communication and followers' dynamics, particularly from the cultural context (Gordon & Yukl, 2004). Further, qualitative research is a dynamic method focused on getting an insight of the meaning of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). This study depends on the descriptions of the lived experience of the Indians and how meaning is constructed within their cultural context (Cole & Knowles, 2001). Therefore, qualitative design assisted the researcher in exploring Mahathir's leadership communication from the cultural context based on inputs from the Indian community. In-depth interview was engaged to address the research questions raised.

In-depth interview is conducted to provide an insight on the leadership communication of Mahathir based on the Indians cultural perspective.

### **3.3 Philosophical Underpinnings**

According to Flick (2009), qualitative research can be classified as a naturalistic, interpretative approach, focused on exploring phenomena or situation in-detail. Furthermore, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) explained that qualitative refers to a set of interpretive, material practice to make the world visible.

The development of qualitative research and interpretivism started since the publication of Immanuel Kant in 1781 whereby he argued that the perception of human does not totally depend on the senses but also involves human interpretations. Another key contributor of interpretivist was Dilthey in 1860s to 1870s who stressed on the importance of understanding and examining the lived experience of people within the social context (Dilthey, 2010). Consistent with the idea, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) clarified the importance of focusing issues from the informants' point of view (perspective). Thus, Creswell (2013) stated that the interpretative methodology is suitable to understand a phenomenon from an individual point of view. Similarly, this study investigates leadership communication of Mahathir from the Indian cultural point of view.

In general, Creswell (1998) divided qualitative traditions of inquiry into five; biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study. Each method is different in their purposes and process of inquiry (Patton, 2015). This study adopted phenomenology inquiry. The founding principle of phenomenological inquiry is that experience should be examined in the way that it occurs, and it involves careful

examination of human experience (Husserl & Welton, 1999). Despite many arguments about the usage of phenomenology, phenomenology is said to be suitable for examining peoples' lived experience from individual perspective (van Manen, 1990). Moustakas (1994) also discussed that in a phenomenological study, a research could build a comprehensive description about people's experience. Consistent with the discussion by van Manen (1990), this study selected the influence of Mahathir's leadership communication towards social change process of Indians as the phenomena. Based on the Indians responses towards Mahathir's leadership communication, essential themes that reflect the Indians' responses from the cultural perspective will be developed. A description of the Indians' responses from the cultural perspective was discussed. Therefore, this study adopts phenomenology inquiry to understand the leadership communication phenomenon from the Indian cultural perspective.

### **3.4 In-depth Interview**

#### **3.4.1 Purpose**

The aim of this research is to explore and understand the Mahathir's leadership communication from Indian cultural perspective. Specifically, in-depth interview is conducted to answer the research questions; that is to explore the influence of Mahathir's leadership communication for social change among Indians in Malaysia from the Indian cultural perspectives. Through the understanding of Mahathir's leadership communication on Indian community in Malaysia from the cultural perspective, the researcher also aimed to develop a leadership communication model that is acceptable by Indians in Malaysia. Thus, in-depth interview is suitable to achieve the specific aims of the research.

### 3.4.2 Sample design

This research consists of 23 informants or interviewees in the data collection process. The informants were selected using purposive sampling based on recommendation by Patton (2002). There are two main reasons to select 23 informants. Firstly, it is based on the suggestion of data collection method. According to Neuman (2006), purposive sampling is used in exploratory research to select cases that will better inform the research study, enabling more insightful linking of the problem statement and research question. He added that the maximum purposive sampling should be selected from the qualified pool of candidates is 20. Besides that, Polkinghorne (2005) recommended that a researcher should interview 5 to 25 individuals who have experienced a phenomena and Creswell (2013) also suggested 5 to 25 informants. Interviewees were selected to ensure the pool of researchers had diversity in terms of arguments and detailed explanation from the respondents. This is to ensure the researcher able to analysis the data and develop relevant themes. Purposive sampling also allows the study to elicit information from rich findings (Patton, 2002). In order to get a holistic perspective on Mahathir's leadership communication, respondents (community leaders) from various groups were interviewed, namely Indian scholars, political representatives, media practitioners, businessmen, and non-governmental organisations, they are the Indian community leaders. Secondly, 23 informants were selected due to. The present study found that the data was saturated after 20 informants, no new themes or findings emerged after 20 informants. Therefore, the researcher concluded that the findings has reached the saturation level. Consistent with the discussion on the general principles of data saturation by Guest, Bunce, &

Johnson (2006), this study found that no new themes, codings, new data and ability to replicate the study. In order to ensure data saturation, the researcher used semi-structured interview questions as same questions may be asked to many respondents. Besides that, the researcher also used probing questions and created a state of epoche (Amerson, 2011; Bucic, Robinson, & Ramburuth, 2010). To further enhance data saturation, as recommended by Bernard (2012), this study interviewed informants from various groups (Indian community leaders) such as media practitioners, political leaders, non-governmental organisations and academic experts. This is to avoid one particular group of individuals who specialise in a particular field to overshadow the data. There were total of 27 research informants were contacted or approached and out of it, 4 research informants declined to participate in the research. The four informants declined to participate because they were worried their participation could be a conflict of interest. They are leaders of Barisan Nasional component parties, therefore, they were worried the information that they provide will be contradicted with the Barisan Nasional ideology towards Mahathir.

Based on the recommendation provided by Creswell (2013), this study follows the process of selecting informants of the study. Firstly, this study identified the individual who had experienced the phenomena particularly, the Indians who had experienced Mahathir's leadership (1981-2003). There are a few other criteria involved in selecting the informants of the study; the informants should be Indians, second, they should be a representative of different organisation. They were identified through online search, popularity, peoples' suggestions and contacts.

Second step is gaining access to the informants which involve several steps. After conducting the background research of the informants, the researcher contacted

the informants who are suitable to fulfill the purpose of the study. After identifying the candidate, the researcher approached the candidate via phone. Upon verbal consent, an email was sent to the candidate along with the informant consent form, interview protocol and information sheet of the research. Once written consent obtained from the candidate, further arrangement for the interview session was made such as fixing time, date and location of the interview. Upon the arrangement, the informants were interviewed.

Listed below are the informants who participated as the study sample (A detail information of the sample was provided in Chapter 4):

- i. Member of Parliament
- ii. President of People's Progressive Party
- iii. Deputy President of Democratic Action Party
- iv. Vice-President of Parti Keadilan Rakyat
- v. General Secretary of Socialist Party
- vi. President of Hindu Rights Action Force (HINDRAF)
- vii. Successful Indian Entrepreneurs in Malaysia
- viii. President of Malaysian Indian Youth Council
- ix. President Malaysia Hindu Sangam
- x. Government Indian officers
- xi. Professional writers
- xii. President of Socioeconomic Development of Indian Community Unit (SEDIC)
- xiii. Temple Chairman
- xiv. President of Pertubuhan Kebajikan Sosio-Ekonomi Masyarakat India (PEREMI)
- xv. Academicians

### **3.4.3 The data collection process**

After approval from Universiti Utara Malaysia, people who met the inclusion criteria were approached and asked to participate. Interviews were conducted over 18 months with the Indians' representatives from various groups such as political leader, non-governmental organisation, media practitioner and academics. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Each interview session lasted between 45 to 60 minutes and proceeded until no new themes emerged. After obtaining informant consent, each informant was asked to verbally respond to the questions on interview protocol. The informants were asked to share their experiences about Mahathir's leadership communication from the Indian cultural perspective.

Interviews are one of the main tools used by researcher to understand interviewees' mindset towards a phenomenon (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Using in-depth interview, this study examined interviewee's mind through their verbal and non-verbal expressions (Patton, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Semi-structured interviews were used for textual data and organised into themes . To ensure that the interviews yielded the depth of information required for the study, interview questions were open-ended, which provided an opportunity for informants to share their responses and perceptions towards Mahathir's leadership communication. Informants were offered the opportunity to add additional information pertaining to the research topic that was not directly solicited (Creswell, 2013). As the data drives the information structure in qualitative research, the form

and order of the interview questions were specific to the study phenomenon (Polkinghorne, 2005).

When examining social and cultural phenomena, language is always an important consideration (Jensen, 2002). Therefore, it is important for the researcher be fully familiar with the language and culture. As the result, all interviews were conducted in English. Each interview was scheduled to run between 45 to 60 minutes and included questions eliciting opinions on topics about Mahathir's leadership communication from the Indian cultural perspective, the characteristics of Mahathir's leadership communication and the influence of Mahathir's leadership communication.

Based on the literature review, three main ideas were identified; leadership communication concept is different from one culture to another, culture influences leadership process, and leadership communication leads to social change. Interview questions were based on theoretical frameworks and conceptualisations that have been discussed in previous chapters. All answers were noted by the interviewer (researcher) during the interviews. In order not to miss any important and valuable information from the respondent, all the interviews were recorded using digital audio tape (recorded with the permission of the informants) and the points discussed were also jot down.

Once finished, respondents were provided with an opportunity to see the transcript for clarification. Member or third-party checks provided a mechanism to ensure the validity of the researcher's interpretation (Merrigan & Huston, 2009). The finalised transcripts were sent to a professional translator for cross-checking and proofreading.

#### **3.4.4 Interview Protocol**

Interview provides researchers with rich and detailed qualitative data for understanding informants' experiences, how they describe those experiences and the meaning they make of those experience (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Based on the recommendation of Castillo-Montoya (2016), in order to ensure the reliability and validity of the interview protocol developed, the researcher of the current study adopted the interview protocol refinement (IPR) framework which includes a four-phase process to develop and fine-tune interview protocol. In the first phase, the researcher focuses on the alignment between interview questions and research questions. This was done to increase the utility of interview questions in the research process (confirming their purpose), while ensuring their necessity for the study (eliminating the unnecessary ones). Understanding the complex experiences that might not unravel before the researcher, intentional and necessary interview questions were included which is to help informants to explain their experiences.

To check the alignment of questions, the researcher mapped the interview questions to the research questions. In the second phase, the researcher focuses on ensuring the interview protocol supports an inquiry-based conversation. According to Patton (2015), a researcher's interview protocol in a tool of inquiry. The second phase entails the researcher developing an inquiry-based conversation through an interview protocol with the interview questions were written differently from the research questions, an organisation that follow social rules of ordinary conversations, a variety of questions and a script with likely follow-up and prompt questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In phase 3, the researcher receives feedback on the interview protocol. It is to

provide the researcher with the information about how well informants understand the interview questions and whether the informants understanding is close to what the researcher intends or expects (Patton, 2015).

The researcher requested some colleagues and supervisor to have a close reading of an interview protocol. The researcher asked them to put themselves in the place of interviewees in order to anticipate how they may understand the interview questions and respond to them (Maxwell, 2013). The fourth phase is piloting the interview protocol. In this stage, the researcher stimulated the actual interview in as real condition as possible. Based on the researcher's interviewer's experience, notes were taken to improve the interview protocol (Merriam, 2009).

Besides that, the researcher also reviewed literature related to leadership communication and Indian culture to develop the interview protocol. The interview questions were developed based on the theoretical gap of the study. It was found that the leadership communication leads to social change in the community. Transformational leadership theory discussed that a transformational leader will be able to contribute to social change. However, the process will be successful only if the leader is culturally aware, knowledgeable and sensitive. In short, culture facilitates the leadership communication for social change process. Interestingly, it was found that studies related to leadership communication for social change from the cultural perspective indeed limited, specifically investigate the leadership communication between the majority (Malays) - minority (Indians) communities in Malaysia.

Besides that, based on the discussion of the literature, the researcher identified three main issues; leadership communication conception was different across culture (Chemers & Ayman, 1993; Smith & Peterson, 2002), secondly, leadership

communication qualities such as transformational leadership communication brings social change to society (Barrett, 2014; Warrilow, 2012), and thirdly discussion on the cultural context of leadership communication, specifically from the perspective of the Indian culture was indeed limited (Avolio & Yammarino, 2002; Yukl, 1999). Thus, the interview questions were designed based on the main issues or ideas from the literature review. Consistent with that, the interview protocol in this study consists of three sections which aimed to answer research questions. The questions were developed in such a way to obtain the information needed by the researcher (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The draft of the protocol is attached in Appendix 1.0. The interview protocol starts with simple, broad and open-ended questions about the conception of leadership communication which aims to address research question 1. The conception of leadership communication was explored including the definition, characteristics of effective leadership communication and functions of leadership communication.

The second section of the interview protocol is to answer research question 2 and 3 which is to understand how Mahathir's leadership communication contributed to social change process and identify characteristics of Mahathir's leadership communication from the Indian cultural perspective. This section aimed to get an insight on how Mahathir's leadership communication was perceived and its effects on the social change process among the Indian community in Malaysia. This question is a more specific, but researcher consistency used semi-structured questioning to encourage informants to discuss their experiences on Mahathir's leadership communication (Janesick, 2004).

The third section is to answer research question 4 that is to explore the Indian culture that influence the Indians' perception towards Mahathir' leadership

communication. Along with the main questions, the research included probing or follow-up questions to get more details on certain issues (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

Colaizzi's (1978) phenomenological method was adopted in analysing interview transcripts. In this method, all written transcripts were read several times. For each transcript, significant phrases or sentences that relates to responses of the Indians on Mahathir's leadership communication were identified. Then, meanings are formulated from the statements and phrases. The formulated meanings are categorised into themes allowing the emergence of themes common to all the informants' transcripts. Then the results are integrated into an in-depth, exhaustive description of the phenomenon. Once descriptions and themes were obtained, the researcher approaches some informants to validate the findings.

According to Meadows and Morse (2001) the methodological rigor was attained through application of verification, validation and validity. To ensure the verification process, this study followed the recommendation suggested by Meadows and Morse (2001). Verification was done by doing literature searches, following phenomenological method, bracketing past experience, keeping field notes, using adequate sample, and interviewing until the achievement of saturation. Validation was achieved through member checks, expert views and key informants. Validity is the outcome and goal of the research and it is based on trustworthiness and external reviews. Clinical application is suggested through empathy throughout the research process (Kearney, 2001).

Data analysis of this study was conducted using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a technique for identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning (or themes) (Clark & Smith, 2015). This present study adopted thematic analysis due to its flexibility applied to any of the major ontological, epistemological and theoretical frameworks underpinning qualitative research, from realism and essentialism to relativism and social constructionism (Braun & Clarke 2013). Secondly, thematic analysis is used to answer most types of research questions that are within the area of interest of a qualitative researcher; ranging from interviews (Huxley, Clarke, & Halliwell, 2014) to secondary sources (Farvid & Braun, 2006). Lastly, thematic analysis can be used inductively (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Thus, thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

There are five key steps involved in data management in thematic analysis, which were applied in the present study. First, familiarisation with data whereby the researcher immerses in data in order to gain an overview of the substantive content and identify topics and subjects of interest. This step ensures that labels developed are grounded in the context of discussion and supported by the data. It involves reading and re-reading data to develop a deep and a familiar sense of the obvious meaning of the data.

Secondly, generating initial codes. A code is a succinct label (a word or a short phrase) that captures a key analytic idea in the data that is associated to the research question. Codes are not only about data reduction in the sense of summarising the meanings in the data, but it also captures the interpretation of the researcher.

Thirdly, searching for themes. Codes can be understood as the building blocks of your themes. While a code relates typically to a very specific aspect of the data, a

theme identifies a general patterning of meaning. The first step of identifying potential themes is usually clustered together codes that relate to a particular issue. A good theme is distinctive but relates to other themes, and together the themes provide a clear image of data set and its interpretation (Clarke & Braun, 2017). The theme developed has relied on the in-depth knowledge of the researcher in the data.

Fourthly, reviewing themes. The review phase develops thematic analysis in relation to the data set as a whole and the coded data. The first aspect of the review is to check all the data coded relevant to each theme to ensure a good fit between candidate themes and coded data. The second aspect of the review is to check candidate themes against the entire data set to ensure a good fit between this and final theme. At this point, a thematic map was developed which is an useful tool for mapping candidate themes and the relationship between them. According to Braun and Clarke (2013), it is good to report two to six themes.

Fifth, defining and naming themes. After deciding on the overall structure of analysis, a detailed analysis of the data in each theme was decided. The researcher refined the focus and scope of analysis and determined the exact story for each theme. Then, the researcher finalised the name of each theme and subtheme. Lastly, writing up thematic analysis. The researcher presents the analytic section which presents the reading of the data and informs the readers the important and interesting part of the data. It effectively presents the evidence based on data and an analytic narrative that answers the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

### **3.6 Ethical Consideration.**

To ensure ethical considerations, such as rights of the informants and sites, this study provided the informants with respect for each individual's autonomy, beneficence (maximize benefits, and minimize risk), and justice (equitable selection and fairness to all informants involved). The researcher sought and received informed consent from each informant. All informants were informed in writing and verbally that the study and participation are voluntary. Prior to participating in this study, informants were provided with a Research Study Information Sheet that outlines the nature of this research. Besides that, informant Inform Consent Form and interview protocols were also given to each informant. There are three ethical considerations in this study are: confidentiality of data, issues of confidentiality with the publication of the findings, and fairness in the reporting of the findings. There were no external or physical risks in participating in this study. Informants were informed that all information collected for this study will always be kept confidential.

### **3.7 Summary**

This chapter provides a detail discussion on the underpinning philosophy of the study, the suitability of qualitative research design, the sampling technique, data collection and data analysis process. This chapter also discussed the validity and reliability of the data collection and analysis processes. The next chapter will be about the findings of the study. The collected data was thematically analysed and reported.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This research sought to investigate leadership communication of Tun Mahathir from the Indian cultural perspective. In-depth face-to-face interviews with various Indian representatives from political parties and non-governmental organisations, media practitioners, government officers, and professionals were conducted for the study to investigate the responses of Indians in Malaysia towards leadership communication of Tun Mahathir, characteristics of Mahathir's leadership communication, how Mahathir's leadership communication influences social change among Indians and what are the cultural values that influenced Indians' perception towards Mahathir's leadership communication. The data were analysed using the NVivo software and figure 4.1 below was constructed. The figure 4.1 shows the phenomena of Mahathir's leadership communication from the Indian cultural perspective. Based on the thematic analysis, five themes were identified; Indians' leadership communication conception, Mahathir's leadership communication, the influence of Indian culture in Mahathir's leadership communication, leadership communication for social change, response to Mahathir's leadership and expectation of the Indians towards leadership communication.

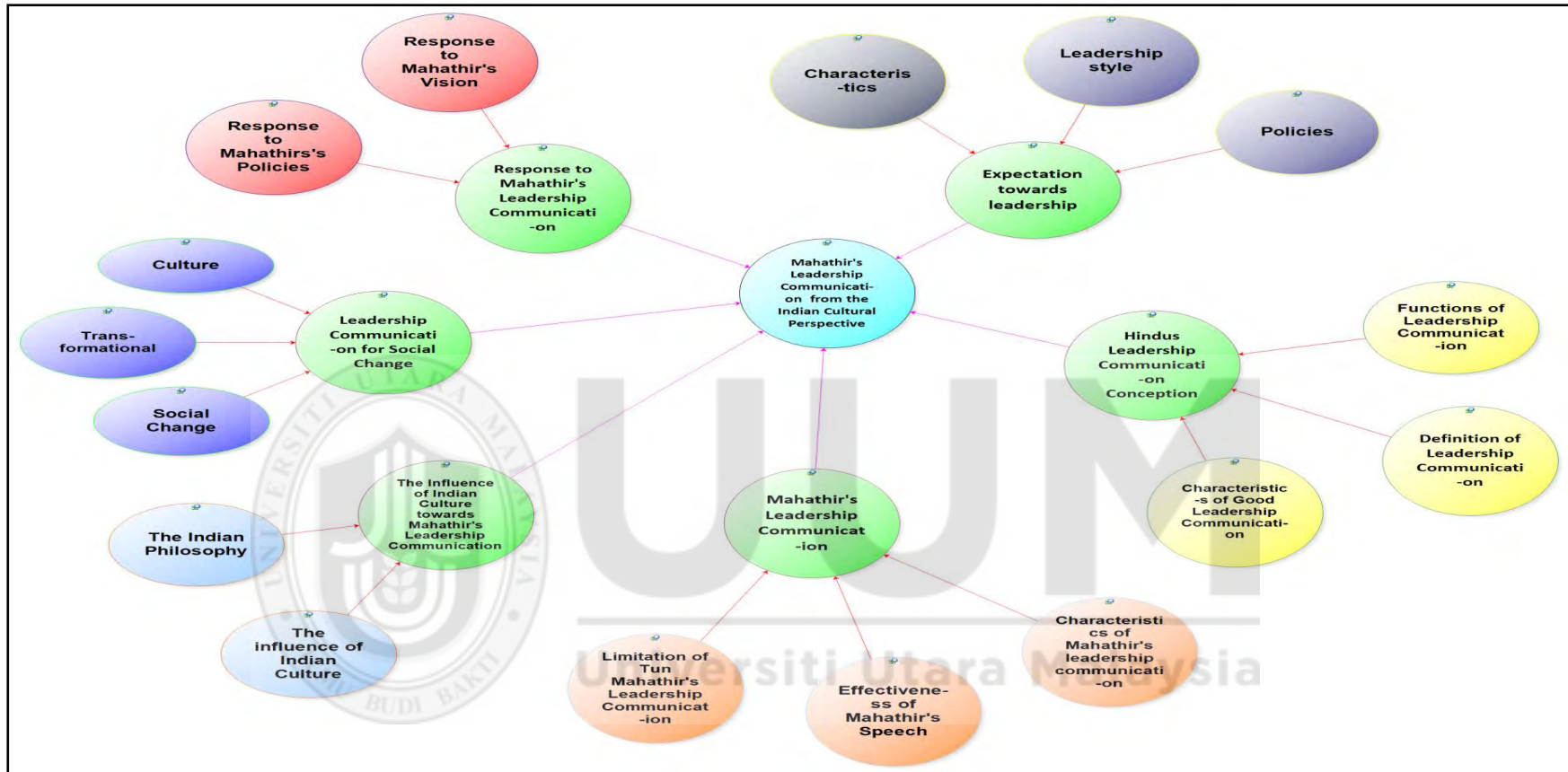


Figure 4.1 Mahathir's Leadership Communication Phenomena from the Indian Cultural Perspective

## 4.2 Informant's backgrounds

Table 4.1

### *Informant's Background Information*

<b>Informants</b>	<b>Type of Organization</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Informants</b>	<b>Type of Organization</b>	<b>Role</b>
1(R1)	Non-Governmental Organisation	President of NGO	13 (R13)	Business	Businessman
2 (R2)	Non-Governmental Organisation	CEO of NGO	14 (R14)	Religious	General Secretary of a Hindu religious organisation in Malaysia
3 (R3)	Non-Governmental Organisation	CEO of NGO	15 (R15)	Political party	A member of parliament and state assemblyman
4(R4)	Political Party	Political leader	16 (R16)	Political party	President of a political party
5 (R5)	Political Party	Political leader	17 (R17)	Political party	A member of parliament
6 (R6)	Non-Governmental Organisation	Founder of NGO	18 (R18)	Religious	Chairperson of a Hindu organisation
7 (R7)	Private Institution of Higher Learning	Academic with management position	19 (R19)	Non-Governmental Organisation	Chairperson of a Hindu organisation
8 (R8)	Business	Businessman	20 (R20)	Media	Writer
9 (R9)	Religious	Chairperson of a temple committee	21 (R21)	Non-Governmental Organisation	CEO of NGO
10 (R10)	Politics	Political leader	22 (R22)	Academic	A researcher who is active in ethnic based studies
11 (R11)	Media	Writer	23 (R23)	Media	Writer
	Private Institution of Higher Learning	Academic with management position			

Table 4.2 shows the background information of the study informants. Engaging various people from different background was essential to get the insight of Mahathir's leadership communication from the Indians cultural perspective.

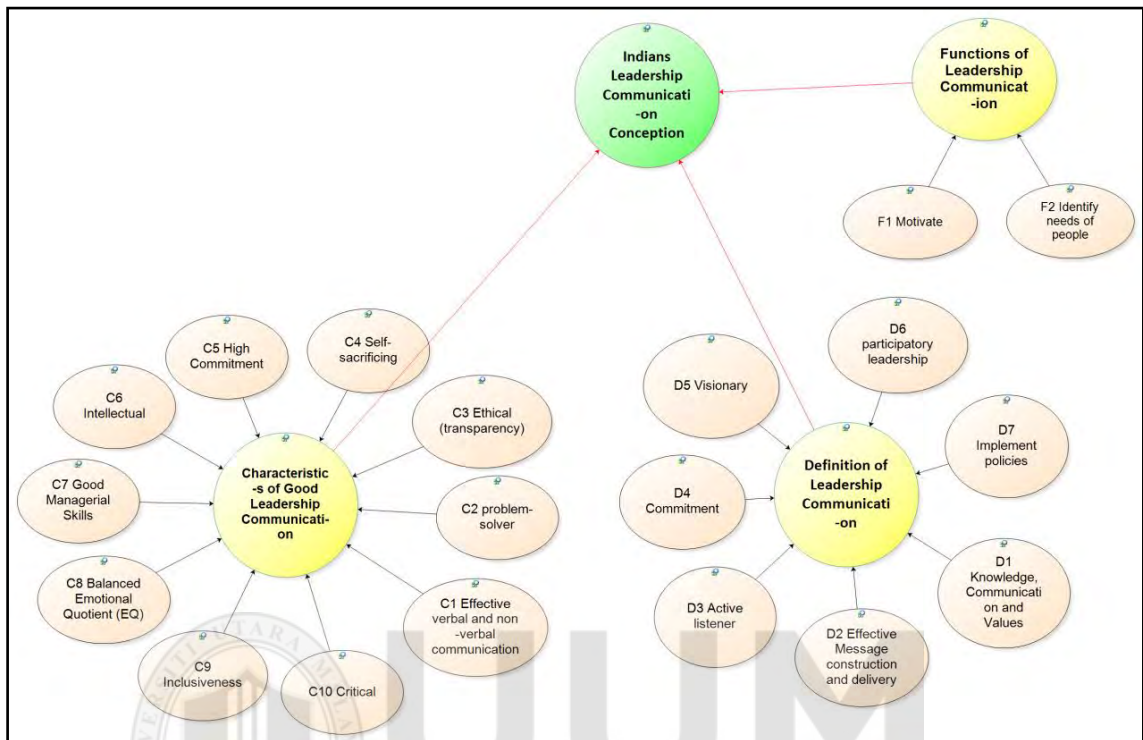
Table 4.1

*Informant's Background Information*

Informant	Type of Organisation
Tun Dr Mahathir bin Mohammad	Politics

Table 4.1 indicates the background information of the study informant. Mahathir was labeled as one of the controversial leaders since the premiership of Tunku Abdul Rahman. He served for the nation for 22 years as the 4th Prime Minister from 1981-2003, and then he was again appointed as the 7th Prime Minister in May 2018. Initially, he was a great supporter of UMNO (1981-2003) but later on formed a new alliance with the opposition party in July 2017 and went on being the chairman of the opposition coalition. His stance on Barisan Nasional government (2016-2017) caused some difficulties to the researcher in collecting data from the period of August 2016 to September 2017. Some parties were reluctant to provide opinion related to Tun Mahathir, especially those who were attached with the Barisan government. Thus, additional time was needed to complete the interview sessions as many informants were reluctant to participate although early agreement has been sought. Tun Mahathir played the role of as an expert validator in this research.

### 4.3 Indians' Leadership Communication Conception-*Sattva Gunas*



*Figure 4.2* Main Themes and Subthemes of Indians' Leadership Communication Conception

Figure 4.2 illustrates the main themes and subthemes of Indians' leadership communication conception. This section attempts to explain the Indians' leadership communication conception from Indians' perspective. From the thematic analysis, the Indians' leadership conception is explained by definition, characteristics and functions of good leadership communication.

### 4.3.1 Definition of Leadership Communication

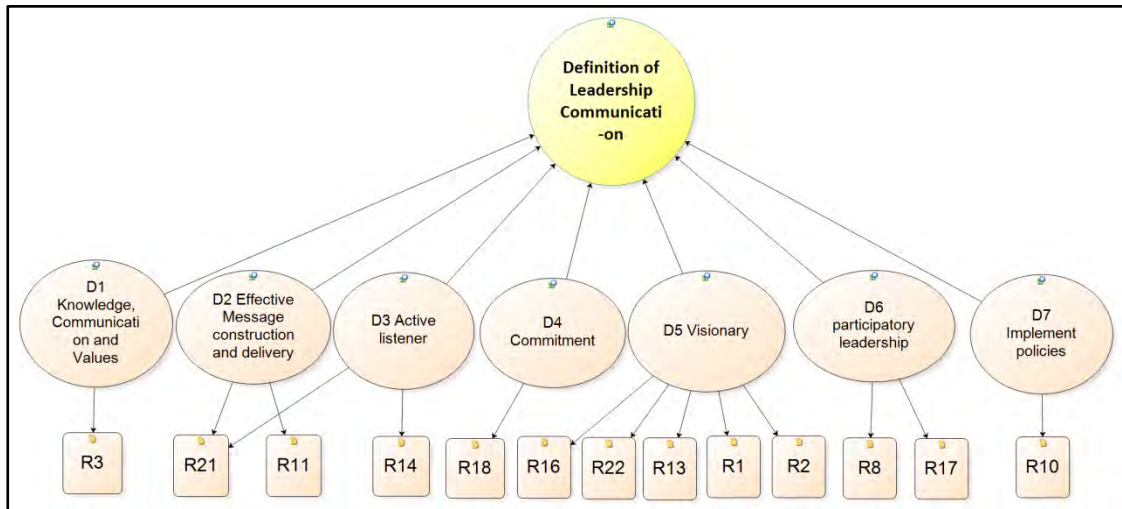


Figure 4.2.1 Definition of Leadership Communication

Figure 4.2.1 illustrates the subthemes that could explain the definition of leadership communication. This section attempts to define and explain the principles of leadership communication from Indians' perspective. From the thematic analysis, the definition of leadership communication is explained by knowledge, communication and values, message construction and delivery, good listener, keep promises, translating vision to the followers, participatory leadership and implementation of policies.

Informant 3 clearly defined leadership communication as a combination of knowledge, communication, and values by providing examples. In the interview session with the informant, he said:

“...First of all leadership is a combination of different aspects and values in a human being. Of course knowledge in a subject and entire field you involve is important. Secondly, skills such as PR skills, communication skills are vital and thirdly, your values. For instance, Einstein was one of the greatest scientists in the 20th century because of his knowledge. Many people look at

him as a leader because he was excellent in his field. When comes to skills, lots of people are taken by the different skills, which outshine them with others. Example like Barack Obama, the 44th President of United States, he came from nowhere. Of course, he had his studies at Harvard and was a good lawyer. However, what made him became the first black President? To tell the truth, when he was proposed as a candidate of President, he was an underdog compared to Hilary Clinton. The way he communicated with people made him a President specifically the way he spoke and the way he handled the media. These involve different skills and body language. Third is the value that you hold on to. What leaders should have is the values. These are basics of the leadership communication...” (R3)

Furthermore, informant 11 and 21 emphasised on the two main concepts of leadership communication which are the message construction and delivery. This situation can be viewed in the following quotes:

“... Leadership communication is not only about communicating the ideas, but it is the way you deliver them. When you communicate your points, it is very important for a leader because the points can be delivered in a different way by different people at different audience. It is about the way you deliver the points or message verbally or non-verbally...” (R 11)

“...Leadership communication refers to various ways of communication with the society or organisation related to a variety of fields including economics, social and educational. In short, it could be defined as an effective way of communicating with all kinds of people. It should be a two-way communication and an exemplary communication...” (R 21)

Besides that, informant 14 stressed that good listening skill is an important component of leadership communication. According to the informant, a good listener could provide good solution to his followers. In a very simple but telling statement, informant 14 said that, a leader should be a good listener. He also must listen to the followers. A leader must understand that followers may be different and thus, if you listen carefully you will be able to give a very good conclusion (decision).

Besides that, informant 18 highlighted that leadership communication is about fulfilling promises to followers. Informant 18 said that a leader who promised something to his or her followers must ensure he fulfills it throughout his or her leadership. As a leader, do not simply promise if you can't implement it.

Informant 1, 2, 13, 16 and 22 stated that translating vision is one of the definitions of leadership communication. The informants highlighted the importance of vision in leadership communication. This view is evident in the following quote:

“...Leadership communication relates to translating the whole leadership vision effectively, particularly to the subordinates. It is all about vision; and leadership comes with a specific culture. How can you effectively communicate with your followers? Everybody must have a common vision. First of all, the vision must be acceptable to everyone and not just to one particular group. When we talk about leadership communication of Hitler, he had a very good leadership communication. He had the supremacy of the Germans, and able to convince the Germans and they just followed him; whether it is right or wrong leadership that is another story. For those

particular moments, that kind of control only can be seen in the history. The guy (Hitler) had a system of communication...” (R13)

Informant 1 strongly asserted that leadership communication is vital for politicians. If there is any problem in communication, then leader can't deliver his vision clearly to the public or supporters or down line. Besides that, informant 16 said that decisions that need to be implemented must not only consider the immediate people who are close to the leaders, but also should reach the vast level right down to the last person in the community.

Informant 2 expressed that a leader must think of the people and for their future and must be a comfortable person. Furthermore, informant 22 said that leadership communication is a very important aspect. The way the leaders communicate with the people is important. According to informant 22, a good leadership is about transmitting visions effectively to the people

Furthermore, informant 8 and 17 also stressed on the participatory leadership as an important component of leadership communication. In the interview session, they said that, a leader must be able to communicate with people to get consensus of people and government agencies regarding how to deliver and motivate them to deliver.

Lastly, informant 10 explained that leadership communication is all about implementation of policies. He asserted that, communication takes place when a leader of a country adopts and implements his policies and informs or educate people on the needs and the importance of the policies.

### 4.3.2 Functions of Leadership Communication

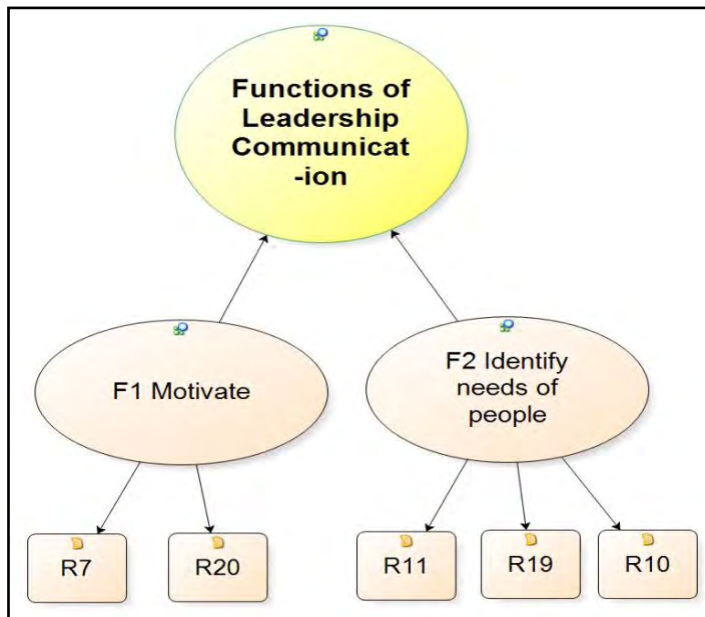


Figure 4.2.2. Functions of Leadership Communication

Figure 4.2.2 indicates the functions of leadership communication. This section attempts to explain the function of leadership communication from the Indians perspective. The functions of leadership communication are divided into two sub-themes which are; motivate and create confidence, and identify the needs of people. Based on the interview sessions, informant 20 and 7 strongly claimed that effective leadership communication involves ability to motivate to create confidence among followers.

In the interview session, informant 20 explained that:

“...Normally, people look for a sense of hope. If a leader is optimistic, he can instill courage and confidence in people. People need a leader to guide them in all levels. You need to be a role model especially in a nation. Leadership communication is important to communicate with people and mobilise them. For instance, Hitler used his leadership communication to instill confidence to rise up. Thus, he regarded himself superior to others. He mobilised people for

war, while Gandhi used his leadership communication for peace. Leadership communication is about influencing followers and it depends on the methods of communicating...”(R 20)

Further, this idea was supported by informant 7 who said that the way a leader communicates has given the confidence among the public to grow fast.

Informant 10, 11 and 19 consistently claimed that effective leadership communication would be able to identify the needs of people. It is evident in the following quotes:

“...Certainly, this is because through a good leadership communication, he would understand the needs of the people. In our country, leaders do what they should to please the people. They do not pay much attention or importance on what people or the country need. For an example, in our country they (government) are trying to implement the ‘Hudud bill’ which is not fair for both Muslims and non-Muslims. Malaysia is a secular country...” (R 10)

“...Yes, it is very important, the message might be the same; but let’s say person A has less confidence in delivering message and then you have person B who would deliver the same message with the leadership communication qualities or skills, the impact would be entirely different in terms of effectiveness of the message in bringing changes. We can look at Mahatma Gandhi who used his leadership communication skills; he speaks about ‘Ahimsa’ which is not something new in Hinduism. But he was able to trigger and merge people to join his movement. And it has come to the extent that today, when one mentions about Ahimsa movement, it automatically refers to Mahatma Gandhi though the concept of peace and “Ahimsa” was already

incorporated in Hinduism and Indian Culture...” (R 11)

Informant 19 also strongly believes that leadership communication can help us to explore (solve) issues. As a social worker, we need a good communication skill to explore issues faced by people.

#### 4.3.3 Characteristics of Good Leadership Communication

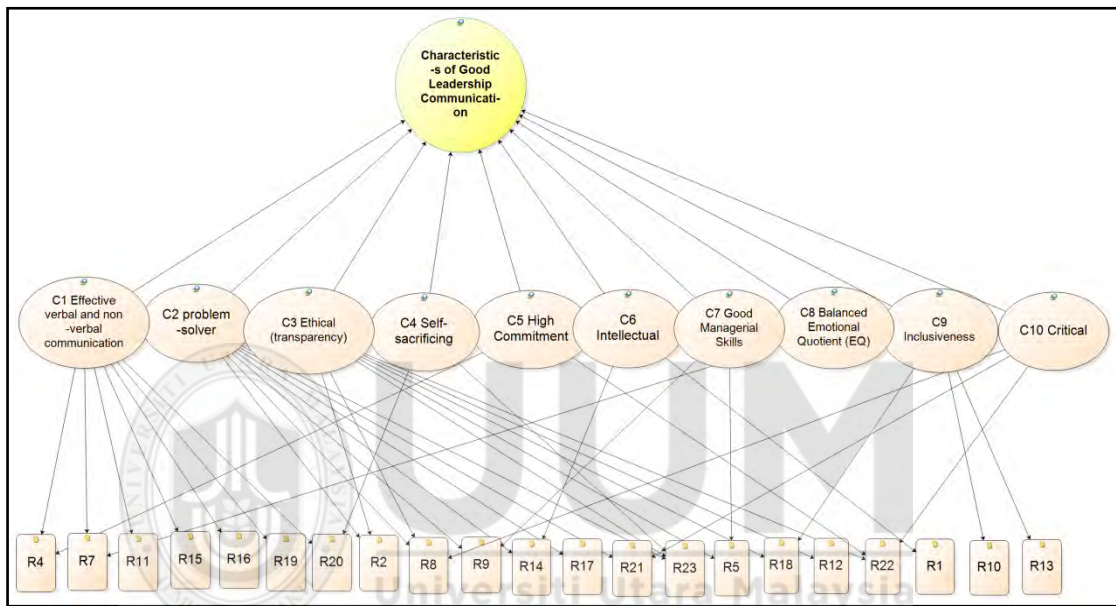


Figure 4.2.3. Characteristics of Good Leadership Communication

Figure 4.2.3 illustrates the characteristics of good leadership communication. This section aims to explain the characteristics of good leadership communication from the perspective of Indians in Malaysia. Based on the data analysis, several subthemes have been developed to explain the characteristics of good leadership and they are; effective communicator, problem-solver, ethical (transparency), self-sacrificing, fulfills promise, knowledgeable, able to control and manage, has balanced emotional quotient, shows inclusiveness and critical.

In interview sessions, most of the informants consistently indicated that effective communication as one of the vital components of effective leadership characteristics.

It was evident in the following quotes:

“... One should be confident when delivering message. When comes to verbal communication, the way you deliver the message must be vocal, which includes the way you stress your points and the way you present yourself. For nonverbal communication eye contact with your audiences and the way you show your leadership qualities will make people listen to you. We can take Mahathir and Anwar Ibrahim as good examples...” (R 11)

“...Leadership communication is basically getting messages across masses and large (group of people). It is a tool which most famous politicians use effectively. The messages must be conveyed, received and it must be complement and supported. Obviously, if you (leaders) are facing an issue they (people) must believe that you (leaders) can deliver it. They(people) must have confidence in you (leaders)...” (R15)

“... Firstly, a leader must be able to clearly specify what he is saying. The message mustn't be complicated, and it has to be simple with reasonable vocabulary so that it can be clearly manifested or understood by average people. It should reach faster to lower level people.....” (R 16)

Informant 19 also expressed that if people try to answer me and explore (understand and analyse) my communication (message), then I perceive it as I'm a good communicator.

Furthermore, informant 20 said that a leader should be a good speaker and must be able to think well and clear. Besides that, informant 4 expressed that a leader who continuously communicates with the grass roots will be able to speak about issues related to the people.

Informant 7 also asserted that people in authority needs to communicate his or her messages or policies to his targeted people. The people can come from any group, ethnicity, race, religion or collectively as citizens of a country.

Besides that, some informants pointed out problem solving as a character of good leadership communication. In the interview sessions, informant 14 and 17 asserted that:

“...A leader must be able to solve problems of his followers. Thus, he must know a lot of things about the problems or issues around him. As a leader, I cannot say I don't know’. For example, information such as if you are 60 years and above or have passed away before receiving pension, you are entitled for some privileges...one needs to know about various government policies in order to solve issues of the people...”(R14)

In addition, informant 17 discussed that a leader must be able to listen and understand his people. He must be analytical to understand the causes of the problems.

Further, the idea was supported by informant 2, 21 and 23 who indicated that a leader should have the ability to address problem of the masses. It is evident in the following quote:

“...Thirdly, a leader should investigate the root cause of the problems in the society. He or she should not make own interpretation about a problem. He

should get feedback from the society to identify the root cause of a problem. Mahathir has been as a leader for a long time compared to other leaders. Mahathir was a visionary leader who was able to develop the nation in different ways because of his visionary character. With regards to that, he introduced Vision 2020, Look East Policy, etc...” (R 23)

Informant 2 and 21 also clearly expressed that leadership communication involves personal touch of people when you communicate with the people and hear their problems, fight to overcome their problems and a leader should be able to address the problems faced by people.

Further, informant 8 and 9 has strengthened the idea that a leader should be a problem-solver by providing a detailed discussion as follow:

“...leader should be able to listen to the people that he intends to lead. If I want to lead a group, I must be able to listen to them (people) through the process of listening. You have a set of ideas so that, you can create a forum for exchanging ideas in which you can build confidence in people and understand them. As a result, he (a leader) should develop strategies, commitment, targets, objectives, visions and missions. That is a collective way of how you develop from a current state to a better state...”

“...The effective way of communication that I would like to see in a leader is, he is willing to be a part of people and live in their status (lifestyle). That means you have a very high level of consciousness on certain issues. The level of consciousness limits the level of aspiration. So, unless a leader uses the same level of consciousness and know the aspiration of a group, of people,

that leader will not have any level of communication with the people. For instance, if I want to work with a poor people such as farmers, I need to devise a mechanism if I want to understand the farmer's problem. I should think like a farmer, be like a farmer and feel like a farmer. I would be able to appreciate it and communicate that to them. Otherwise, I will be seeing only the issues of farmers from far away. I will make my own assumptions of their problems and simply give solutions. The effective leadership deals with the level which a leader actually plays the role of conscious state of the issue itself..." (R 8)

"...Definitely can, going along by satisfying their requirements. For example, when a poor person needs to run a family, he need to get employed. How to get him employment? Through education, that's what a good leader should do. He works for the people. For instance, look at Indian actor (cum politician) MG. Ramachandran. He was from a poor family. He knows what the people needed and their requirements, and so he became a good leader. He was able to satisfy the requirements of the subjects/people..." (R 9)

Based on the thematic analysis, another important character that was consistently highlighted by informants was an ethical leadership communication process. Specifically, informant 12 and 22 highlighted transparency in leadership communication process.

Informant 12 expressed that leadership communication needs to have transparency and being able to anticipate with the subordinates and also practice mechanism for the benefit of the entire group. So, this will help the group to survive in day-to-day activity and also progress for long term.

This view is also evident in the following quotes:

“... Thirdly, he must practice transparency in his leadership. So that, they will be able to see all the actions of the leader. For instance, the assets of ministers under the leadership of Mahathir, they didn't declare it and it is not transparent. It seems like the ministers were corrupted and I would say it as a basis of leadership communication...” (R 22)

Besides that, in a short but telling statement informant 2, 5, 8, 18, and 23 stressed on the ethics of a leader in the leadership communication process. Informant 2 clearly asserted that a leader must not be corrupted by their idea. Besides that, informant 5 said that a leader must be honest and carry moral values. He must be morally approachable and be fair for the masses. To support, informant 8 and 18 clarified that a leader must have a basic set of values that affect the way people perceive. Lastly, they added that a leader who wants to serve the community must very ethical and discipline.

Next, informant 20 described self-sacrificing as another good characteristic of leadership communication. They have explained that a leader should prioritise matters related to followers rather than personal matters. It is evident in their interview sessions:

“... The way you carry yourself, it will make people get attracted and inspired by you. National leaders should have that kind of qualities. For instance, Nelson Mandela and John Kennedy. They were admired. In Asia, we have Lee Kuan Yew, Sukarno. I think independent leaders such as Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tun Sambanthan played that role. People look up to them for

their self-sacrificing quality...” (R 20)

To support the arguments, informant 2 strongly asserted that a leader should not give priority to his personal matters. For instance, a leader should not make use of the society to generate income.

Furthermore, in the interview sessions, informant 4 and 22 have indicated that high commitment is a very important component of a good leadership communication. Informant 4 explained that, “A leader might able to speak multiple languages and has the best consultant but that is not enough. He must do work and fulfill promises to the people and he must be a good listener.” It was further supported by informant 22 who said that, “Secondly, fulfill his promises to the people.”

Furthermore, informant 1 and 14 who were active member of non-governmental organisations asserted that good leadership communication comes from a leader who is intellectual. They said that leaders must be readers; they must have knowledge in everything and must be knowledgeable.

Next component is good managerial skills. Based on the interview session, informant 5 and 9 strongly indicated that a good leadership communication is all about control and manage. Informant 5 said that, “a leader must be able to convince people on what he is trying to do. A leader must be able to get support from people. He must convince his followers about his ideas to reach certain objectives of goals. Informant 9 expressed that, “good leadership communication is about a leader who can manage and control the people below him. For an example, Samy Vellu is a good leader” (R 9)

Another character of a good leadership communication is balanced emotional quotient. Informant 7 of the present study has indicated that a good leadership communication

is reflected by a leader who possesses a balanced emotional quotient. In the interview he said, a leader should have wisdom as well as emotional experience.

Moreover, informants 10, 13 and 18 consistently pointed out that inclusiveness is another character of good leadership communication. In the interview sessions, they said, a good leadership should consist of leaders who are inclusive towards all communities. It must be the inclusive approach that encourages the subordinates to progress; they (leaders) must be able to understand and listen to the comments or suggestions from the people in achieving goals. If it is not inclusive, it would not be effective. They added that, good characteristics that should be found in a leader are positive thinking and again should be a leader to everyone/ every corner of the nation. You cannot focus only on one group and leave out another. That should be the quality of a good leader. A better leader will transform better ideas to all communities and improve the country. Positive thinking will positively benefit a country or community. You should not be the other way around. If you have A and B, and you are a leader, you cannot say A is good and B is not good. You cannot decide that, you should take both and serve them equally.

Lastly, informants indicated that good leadership communication should be critical. In a very short but telling statement, they said that:

“...he must be proactive and action oriented. For instance, in NGOs like Suaram, a leader must be able to plan activities, and if it is a government organisation, you need to plan for policy change. For instance, we in ‘Suaram’ cannot wait until the National Security Bill(NSC) passed in Parliament. We need to continuously conduct campaigns to stop NSC...” (R 21)

Informant 22 also clearly indicated that a leader must be visionary and must practise certain principle consistently and shouldn't change it over time. Lastly, he should be able to stand the scrutiny as a leader.

#### 4.4 Leadership Communication for Social Change

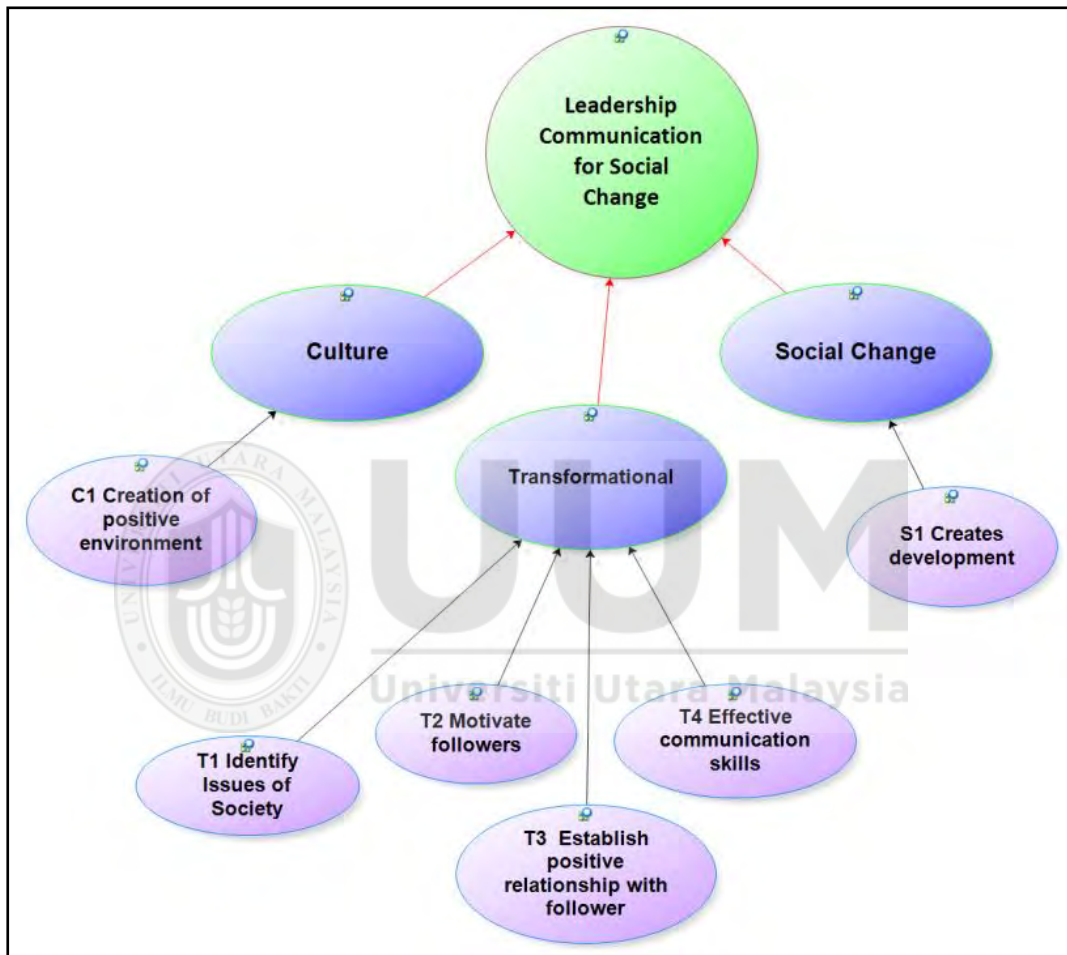


Figure 4.3. Main Themes and Sub-themes of Leadership Communication for Social Change

Figure 4.3 shows the themes and sub-themes of leadership communication for social change. This theme attempted to explain how leadership communication contributes to social change from the Indian community perspective.

#### 4.4.1 Transformational

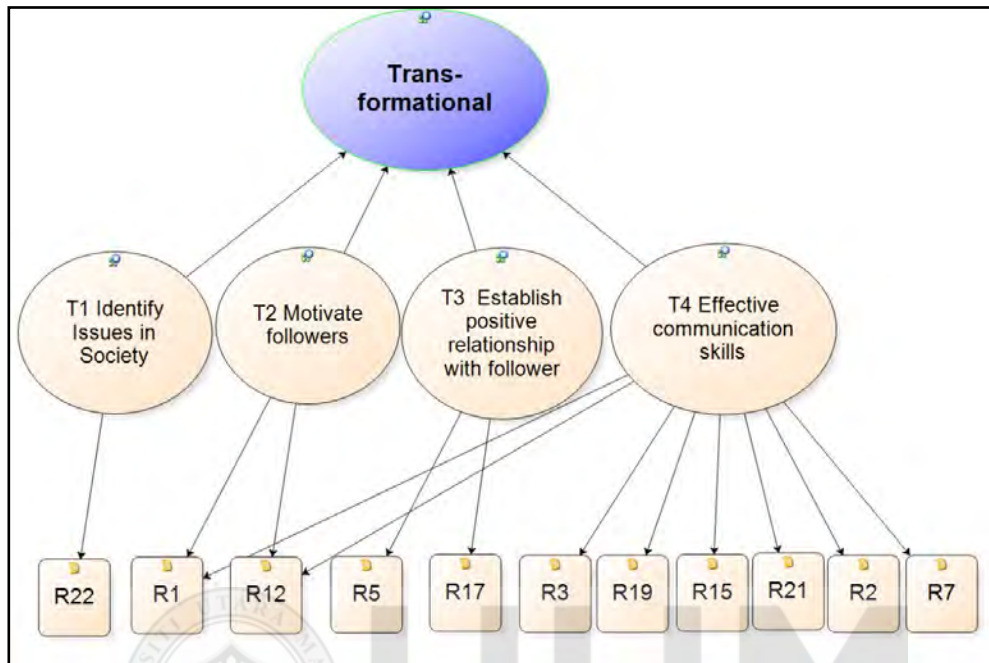


Figure 4.3.1 Transformational

Figure 4.3.1 shows the subthemes of transformational. Under transformational theme, sub-theme that could explain how leadership communication could lead to social change was identified.

In the interview session, informant 22 asserted that leadership communication enables leaders to identify issues pertaining to the society. Researcher 22 expressed that:

“...For a society, leadership communication is very important because understanding the needs of the society is the responsibility of a leader. If a leader is able to understand the needs of the society, he could definitely bring social change. There are many leaders who are unable to understand the needs of the society, so they remain in their comfort zones without knowing the needs of the people. If a leader is able to understand the needs of the society

and put his effort towards solving the issues, surely he can bring social change...” (R 22)

The next subtheme that could explain transformational quality is motivating followers. Informant 1 asserted that a leader would be able to motivate his or her followers through effective leadership communication.

Consistent with the idea, it was concluded that leadership communication would assist a leader to build confidence in followers. Informant 12 expressed that the importance of leadership communication is seen when a leader can influence followers to see the benefits which will be built confidence among the followers. So, this will naturally bring social change to the society and visions can be achieved.

Furthermore, based on the interview sessions, it was identified that Mahathir's leadership communication established and strengthened relationship between people. Informant 17 strongly asserted that Mahathir get consensus before implementing a policy. In addition, informant 5 further explained that leadership communication is essentially important for a leader. It can be defined as relationship between a leader and people that he seeks to represent. Informant 5 indicated that Mahathir is a leader who possess effective leadership communication which enable him to strengthened relationship between people.

The next subtheme to explain transformational subtheme is effective communication skills.

Based on the data analysis, it was identified that most informants indicated that effective communication skills as an important component of transformational quality. Informant 1 stated that good communication of leaders definitely can bring change. If

a communicator or leader talks in improper manner using high tone and being autocratic, it will only create fear in the public. Besides that, informant 3 stated that leader must be a reciprocator and respond to people. To support, informant 7 asserted that, good leadership communication will keep the targeted public well informed. However, it depends on the context. Informant 12 also said that, leader shares information with his people for various purposes for the benefit of the entire group of people.

In addition, informant 15 explained that transformation communication skill is an important tool in politics; the way a leader expands and conveys policies really matters. For example, the democrats and socialists get their messages across the people very well. Informant 19 explained that transformational communication depends on the knowledge and the way we deliver social message. Informant 19 also said that Mahathir able to simplify messages and the language of the messages which makes the people believe in such leaders.

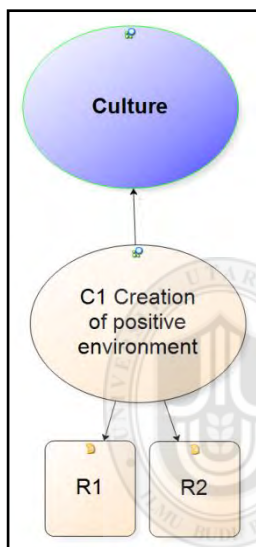
Informant 21 also explained that:

“...Definitely, it is important to bring social change. However, it depends on power and position. If a leader is able to communicate effectively, he can bring some changes by introducing visions for the society. A leader with good planning is able to reach people well through two-way communication. For instance, to abolish POCA, Suaram sat and planned about the effect of POCA to the society because many people were arrested under POCA and not given rights to defend themselves. So, Suaram highlighted the effect of this Act to the family members of the people who were arrested. In order to challenge the Standard of Procedures and Law, we need to prove that the Act is

unconstitutional. So, a leader must be able to change strategy in order to bring social change...” (R 21)

#### 4.4.2 Culture

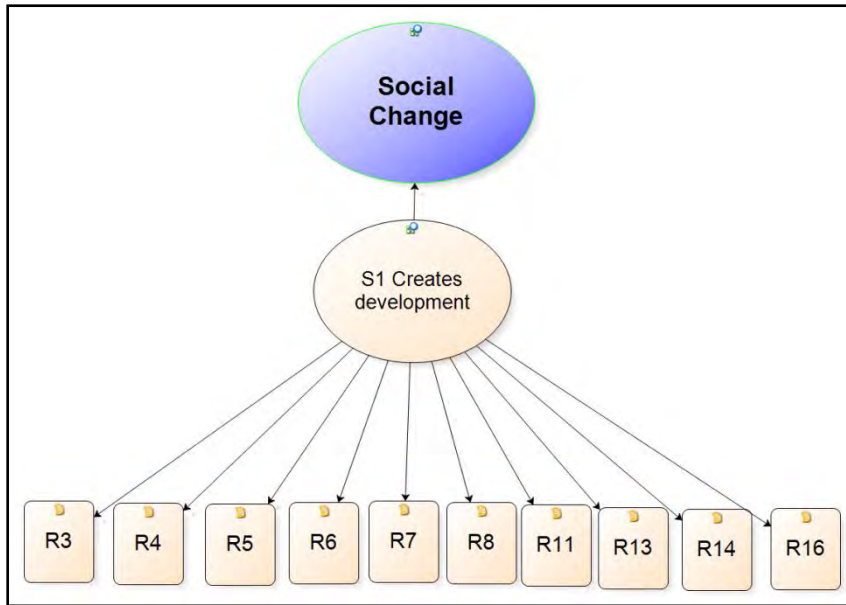
The next subtheme which could explain leadership communication for social change is culture.



*Figure 4.3.2 Culture*

Figure 4.3.2 indicates the subtheme for culture. Based on the data analysis, informants indicated that transformational quality will lead to the creation of a positive environment for interaction. Informant 1 and 2 discussed that, leadership communication with proper leader is vital to create a good political culture. They also clarified that, sometimes, a good leadership communication will produce high-achievers. For instance, Mahathir’s leadership communication made people to be more independent.

#### 4.4.3 Social Change



*Figure 4.3.3 Social Change*

Figure 4.3.3 illustrates the subtheme for social change. It was identified that social change could be explained through transformational quality. Specifically, most of the informants explain that transformational quality could lead to the development of the society. Informant 3 stressed that communication is very important, especially because leaders are the ones who inspire people to move forward regardless of community, organisation, or country.

This is also evident in the following quotes:

“...a good characteristic of leadership communication depends on how a leader can empower people. For example, in the annual budget plan, normally leaders say that they want to listen from the people and know what people want but at the end of the day, the decisions are made by the government or bureaucracy. Today, we have local councils where leaders can allow people to participate in planning development. The government’s role is to provide

money from the tax collected. This is what we call as participatory democracy system. People will have a sense of belonging and they will not misuse it. People are empowered too...” (R 4)

“...Not all the leaders can bring social and political changes, only political leaders who are the head the government are able to do so as they have power and position to implement policies. Social, political changes are possible when a political leader conveys his or her ideas and they are accepted by the masses. Then only he can bring social change...” (R 5)

“... I perceived leadership communication as an effective way of moving a group of people from one stage to another stage by providing empowerment. I believe leadership communication must involve getting people to share their ideas and empowering them to achieve the vision. Leadership communication ables a leader to share his views and consolidate them into one mission...” (R 8)

“...We can take the November 2001 incident as an example - the Hindraf movement. People (Indians) faced many problems, they were not happy with the government and they realised the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) didn't do much to bring social changes or be their voice of change. Hindraf fought for people with good leadership communication qualities as they knew their stuff (vision) and audience. You can see that they had a clear message and good communication qualities (communication skills) and they knew their audience well. These are the three different things that should come to gather...” (R 11)

“... It is important, especially for a family-based leadership. For instance, I wish (greet) all my staff when I enter my office. When conducting a program, I’ll make it family-based. Even the vice president and secretary, I will address them as brothers. So nobody will be against one another. They will think all as their relatives. This is a part of our culture...” (R 14)

“...A leader with good leadership communication can bring social change to a society. People like to listen and watch good speakers. So a leader who knows how to communicate definitely can bring changes to the society. His charisma and message conveyed would certainly be accepted by the people. So a good communicator is someone who is in position and makes people like the way he talks and transmits his message using simple language. Such person can send out message clearly...” (R 16)

Lastly, informant 7 and 13 also discussed that social change is only possible if the society by itself works towards the change and highlighted that good leadership communication can be the starting point of the change. Consistent with the discussion, informant 13 said that leadership communication is an integral part of community development which can make a lay man or ordinary person to understand visions and bring social change...” (R 13)

## 4.5 Characteristics of Mahathir's Leadership Communication

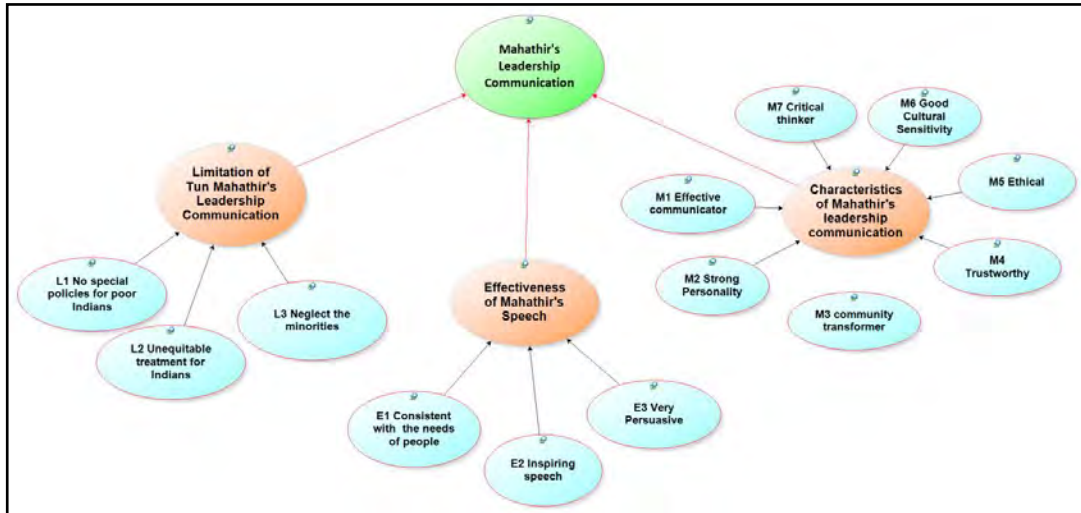


Figure 4.4 Main Themes and Subthemes of Mahathir's Leadership Communication

Figure 4.4 highlights Mahathir's leadership communication. From the thematic analysis, Mahathir's leadership communication is explained by characteristics of Mahathir's leadership communication, effectiveness of Mahathir's speech and limitations of Mahathir's leadership communication.

### 4.4.1 Characteristics of Mahathir's Leadership Communication

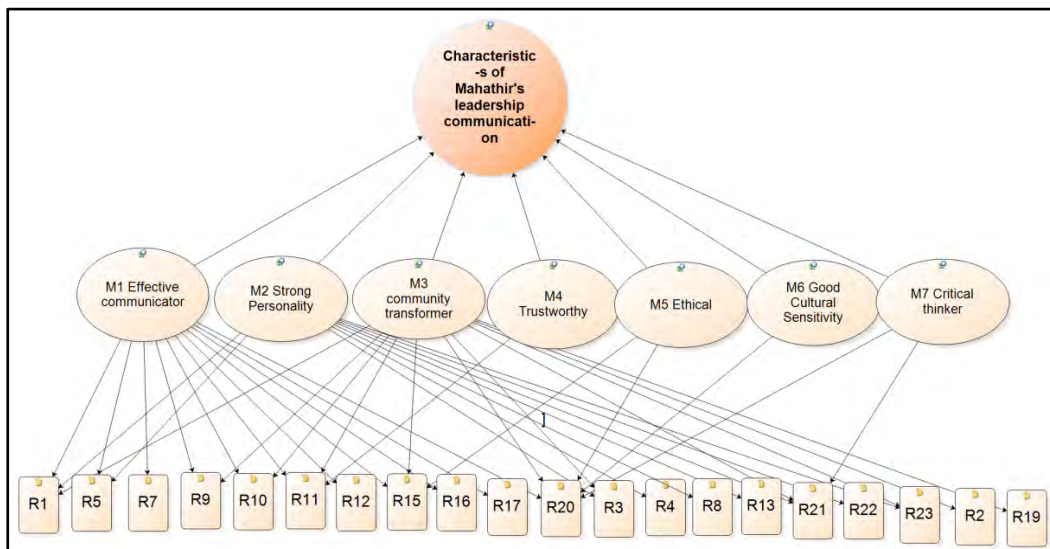


Figure 4.4.1 Characteristics of Mahathir's Leadership Communication

Figure 4.4.1 demonstrates the characteristics of Mahathir's leadership communication. From the thematic analysis, the characteristics of Mahathir's leadership communication is explained by effective communicator, strong personality, community transformer, trustworthy, ethical, good cultural sensitivity and critical thinker.

Based on the in-depth interview sessions with all the Indians, the present study found that most of the informants clearly expressed that Tun Mahathir is an effective communicator. In the interview sessions, most of the respondents (total of 11) concluded that Tun Mahathir's leadership communication showed that he is an effective communicator. As evidence, informant 5 and 9 expressed that Mahathir is a man who possesses effective speech. Informant 5 added that Mahathir can deliver speeches in a simple and straightforward way. He is able to convey ideas convincingly. To support, informant 9 said that, "Mahathir is a very good speaker and he is able to convince people through his speech".

In addition, informant 15 said that:

"...I think he is one of the gifted men. He can think and speak constantly. He is very thought provoking and if you see him speaking, he is neither aggressive nor nonaggressive but able to communicate effectively to the fortunate people of the country/ less educated/more fortunate/upper middle class..." (R 15)

Secondly, informants (nine informants) expressed that Mahathir possesses a strong personality. They have quoted some real incidents which are evident in the following quotes:

“... Actually, we must understand Mahathir’s brand of leadership is dictatorial. He did not accept any different voice. Just see Musa Hitam, Ghabar Baba, Annuar Ibrahim. At the end, he was forced to pass his leadership to Badawi. He was a dictator; he had people in MIC and MCA with similar mind like SamyVellu. SamyVellu has the same brand of leadership varieties of Mahathir. They were dictatorial, and he SamyVellu spent most of his time during his leadership fighting with Tan Sri Subra and late Pathmanathan. I view him as anarchy or autocratic. He is not democratic, he actually didn’t support democratic values. He believed that there shouldn't be a fully democratic country and federal for people...” (R 22)

Another important characteristic of Tun Mahathir’s leadership communication that was mentioned by informants throughout the interview sessions were associated with being a community transformer.

“... When Mahathir was a PM, we saw him as a leader because of his leadership communication qualities. He walks the talk. He wanted to bring change, modernisation and he did it. He wanted to do KLIA, KLCC, he did it. He does what he speaks...” (R 11)

“...I would think he is a person who was focused on what he wants. When he wants something, he will actually get it. For example, In 1980s, he wanted reduce the monarch power. He went around the country looking for peoples’ support by holding rallies. He was such a good speaker. I was fascinated with the crowd who were chanting Hidup Melayu, Hidup UMNO and Mahathir. When he knows that he needs to get out of a controversy, he will do what it takes and make it happen...”(R 10)

“...The development of Malaysia is based on the framework that was established by Mahathir. Mahathir has built confidence among Malaysians to develop. The policies that Mahathir introduced were aimed for the development of the nation. For instance, the development of KLIA, Putrajaya were Mahathir’s development plans...” (R 23)

“...As long as he is satisfies the requirement of the subjects, I will be with him. Mahathir and Tunku Abdul Rahman more or less have the same characteristics. For example, Sultan of Johor facilitates his subjects (people) a lot. He even visited areas where people were suffering. We can see 60% of this character in Mahathir’s leadership...” (R 9)

Informant 2 and 3 also said that, “Whatever promises he made, he fulfilled it, and his time management skill is fantastic. He comes on time and expects everybody else to do the same. That is a very good thing about him. They said he is a leader who was assertive and try to get things done, whether it is good or bad.

According to informant 1, leaders with knowledge will be able to communicate well or read the need of the followers. Further, leaders must be opinion leaders who can bring development to the public. The informant stressed that Mahathir’s policies for nation building were good.

To support, informant 15 also explained that leadership communication can bring a lot of changes. In 22 years of Mahathir, we can see significant changes and effects in our lives, from younger generation to older generation. He transformed the country in many ways compared to other Prime Ministers. Consistent with the arguments,

informant 19 indicated that, the most attractive thing about Mahathir is his boldness in coming out with an idea. He was very clear with the ideas he developed and tried to share them with others clearly.

Informant 20 also highlighted the visionary quality of Mahathir. He said that Mahathir is visionary and wasn't afraid to argue about an issue. About Operasi Lalang, he discussed about it in the parliament, he had a consultative council and the reports were there.

In a very simple but telling statement, informant 11 conceded that Mahathir is a trustworthy leader. In the interview session, he said:

“...He is prepared. For example, when he chairs a meeting, he is already prepared with points and decisions. He just needs people to endorse it. For example, the idea of building Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC), he already had plans and was well-prepared. Always, there were people to work with him. When he communicates his ideas, his speech is meaningful enough to make people believe him...” (R 11)

Informant 15 and 20 also conceded that Mahathir is an ethical leader by indicating that there was no financial scandal or corruption that was associated with him. Further, he was classified as a good family man and religious person. Informant 15 and 20 said that, Mahathir is a leader who abides in religion and a strong family man. They have highlighted that there were no many scandals involved him. They also indicated that he was not lustful and always with his wife. This situation portrays Mahathir as an ethical leader.

Besides that, informant 20 also indicated that Mahathir had a good cultural sensitivity compared to other leaders. He indicated that the cultural sensitivity under the leadership of Mahathir was better during his premiership than now.

“...During his era, there was a change in the ‘face’ of Islam and there were demands from the grass roots. Constantly, UMNO was struggling to compete with PAS. So, Islamisation was a strategy to pacify. He brought Annuar and established Islamic Institutions. He had a tight grip on Islam but he didn’t create insecurity for other religions. Cultural sensitivities during Mahathir’s time were better than now...” (R 20)

Lastly, informants 20 indicated that Mahathir was a critical thinker as he was able to analyse issues or situations and provide ideas consistent with the needs of the people. In the interview sessions, informant 20 said:

“...Mahathir always stood up as an independent thinker. He was a writer and thinker. He has challenged other leaderships with his views. Mahathir at that point convinced UMNO members that Tunku was wrong. So Tunku lost the party election. Mahathir criticised Tunku for neglecting Malays and poverty...” (R 20)

To support the arguments, informant 21 discussed that Mahathir was a doctor thus he possessed a good analytical skill and able to address the root cause and solve problems. It helps him to solve the issues pertaining to people.

#### 4.4.2 Effectiveness of Mahathir's Speech

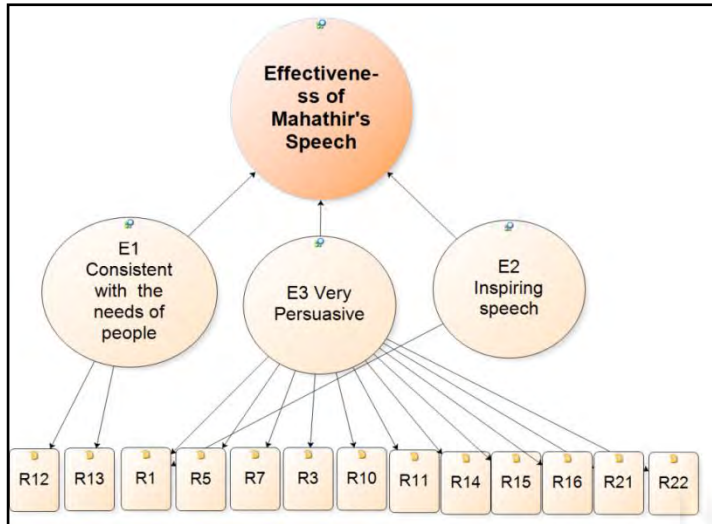


Figure 4.4.2 Effectiveness of Mahathir's Speech

Figure 4.3.2 illustrates the effectiveness of Mahathir's speech. This section attempts to discuss the effectiveness of Mahathir's speech. From the thematic analysis, the effectiveness of Mahathir's speech is explained by consistent with the needs of people, very persuasive and inspiring speech.

Informant 12 and 13 indicated that Mahathir's speech was consistent with the needs of the people. In the interview session, informant 12 and 13 discussed that Mahathir has his way of addressing the audience to explain his actions which seems logical and satisfying for the society. This sounds effective, however further research is required to explore the above. Besides that, informant 13 asserted that he preferred certain development plans initiated by Mahathir. He believed infrastructure development such as North-South Expressway and base-port KLIA were needed. Proton was a fiasco, taking over MAS was a fiasco, Forex Trading was another fiasco. He also created a few billionaires and millionaire in the Malay community..." (R 13.

Furthermore, informant 1 classified Mahathir's speech as inspiring speech. He said that, he love to listen to Mahathir's speech da. Besides that, most informants labeled Mahathir's speech as very persuasive. They have strongly indicated that Mahathir's possesses effective communication skills. In the interview sessions, informants said that, Mahathir knows how to persuade people by his rhetorical skill and during his tenure, his speech was new to people, but he knew what he was talking, and it was very clear. The informants highlighted Mahathir's vision for the future of Information Technology for instance, was very clear too.

In addition, informant 11 said that:

“...Yes, it was when he was a Prime Minister for 22 years and it is still effective where he technically forms the opposition now. In Mahathir's era, people called him a leader where everyone listens to him when he speaks because of his caliber that he has. As a teenager, I found that when he speaks, people listen not only because of the message he sends but the way he presents them, and these are the leadership qualities. And the moment he became the Prime Minister, his leadership communication, whether verbal or non-verbal made people listen to him...” (R 11)

“...he is well prepared when he delivers his speech. He doesn't just deliver, but he communicates his speech. The message is very clear, he comes prepared. He has the leadership communication qualities, style, body language, and individuality. He is a Kedahan and when he speaks, the element (dialect) or 'Bahasa Kedah' is there and that makes him unique and that uniqueness makes him a good leader. And another thing, I am sure that he practices and don't just give an impromptu speech...” (R 11)

“...I think he is one of the gifted men. He can always think and speak constantly. He is very thought provoking and when he speaks, he is neither aggressive nor nonaggressive but able to communicate effectively to the fortunate people of the country/ less educated/more fortunate/upper middle class. He uses a very easy and simple Bahasa (Malay language) and people can understand what he says ...” (R 15)

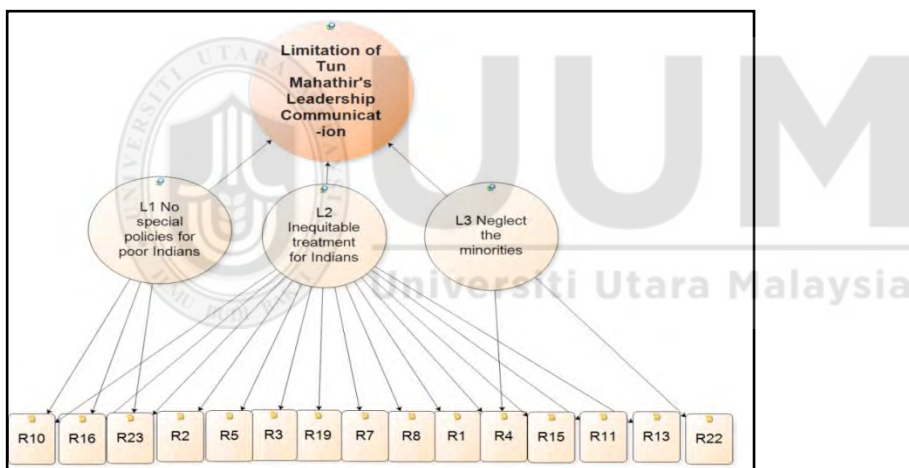
“...Among many speakers, Tun Mahathir is one of those very good speakers. He is one of those leaders who speaks very clearly using simple Bahasa (Malay language) and English. With that talent and charisma, when he talks, people like to listen, yes, it is effective...” (R 16)

“...His speeches are excellent. His pronunciation and language are fluent. The delivery mechanism itself is very good. When he speaks, we can see his tone, he knows when to use high pitch and low pitch. His voice is practically very attractive. Then, he provides facts which flows along his speech. He knows how to construct message that he wants to reach across. So, even a lay man can be attracted with his speech...” (R 19)

“...Mahathir’s speech was effective because he is very confident and able to articulate message very well to the general public. The public with feudal mentality was easily convinced by his strong speech. Yes, Mahathir’s speech was really effective. This is because the content of his speech was in-depth...” (R 21)

Furthermore, according to informant 5, Mahathir is a man who can give effective speech. He can deliver speeches in simple and straightforward way. He is able to convey ideas convincingly. He is an opportunist that takes advantage on people's need. Informant 14 also highlighted that Mahathir can talk without a script and stated that to speak like Mahathir is difficult because Mahathir can speak for hours without script. To support, informant 3 discussed that Mahathir took his time to draft his speech with powerful messages and informant 3 stressed that Mahathir's message and delivery were very powerful.

#### 4.4.3 Limitation of Mahathir's Leadership Communication



*Figure 4.4.3* Limitation of Tun Mahathir's Leadership Communication

Figure 4.3.3 illustrates the limitation of Mahathir's leadership communication. Based on the interview sessions, the researcher has identified three main limitations of Mahathir's leadership communication.

Firstly, the informants have pointed out that there was no special policies for poor Indians in Malaysia under the premiership of Mahathir. Informant 10, 16 and 23 conceded that:

“...In that aspect I think he failed because he only communicated with MIC and its leader Samy Vellu. He never communicated with any other Indians. Samy Vellu wasn't really a qualified person and the party never had vision for Indians. Tun Mahathir only relies on him (Samy Vellu) to develop the Indian community. Whether he sincerely cared about the result is another story. I would say he failed to contribute towards Indians...” (R 16)

“...Mahathir ignored the cultural components of Indians in Malaysia. He didn't aim to uplift the Indians economically. There is no policy for Indians under the leadership of Mahathir. The only policy that was implemented for the Indians were the Malaysia Blueprint under the Third Malaysia Plan. It was the idea of Tun Abdul Razak and Tan Sri Manickavasagam. It was a 20-year plan consistent with the New Economic Policy. After Manickavasagam, Sammy Vellu took over. Based on my observation, Samy Vellu made his own decision without consensus...” (R 23)

“...He only highlighted good (positive) things about Indians by saying many Indians were professionals. Even in MIC annual meetings, he ignored the social life of Indians. As evidence, he ignored the Indian community in estates but supported the Malay community. He developed Malay plantations, but ignored the estates of Indians. No initiatives for Indians by Mahathir...”(R 23)

Informant 10 also indicated that there is no special policy for the Indians. The development of the Indians was a result of own initiative of the Indian community. He mentioned in his speech, there were more Indian professionals such doctors under his leadership which was a result of own initiative of the Indian community.

Secondly, most of the informants of the present study indicated that Mahathir's leadership communication serves inequitable treatment for Indians in Malaysia. Informant 1 explained that as a Prime Minister, Mahathir got all the power, but he didn't deliver and he marginalised the Indian community compared to Datuk Seri Najib bin Tun Abdul Razak who is did more for the Indians.

To support, other informants explained that:

“... Why I am disagreeing is because large number of estate workers displacement took place during Mahathir's time. A study conducted by the Centre of Policy Change confirmed that from 1970 to 2000, 600,000 Indians were displaced from their estates. This is the largest displacement in Asian region. But it went unheard. When a community is displaced, you need to provide land, training, houses, schools and temples. Nothing was by Mahathir...” (R 10)

“...As I mentioned before, he wants to known as a Malay. In Malaysia, Malay means Islam. That's why he tried to instill Islamic values in the government sector. For instance, Bersih, Cekap, Amanah, dan Jangan Ambil Rasuah. All these were universal values but he labeled them as Islamic values. He wanted to use the Islamic label which is equal to Malay supremacy. He had to implement them to show his Malay identity...However, there are some negative impacts. In the process of modernisation, the Indians were left out. To build KLIA, six estates were used. The people were relocated to Dengkil. They were relocated to five block flats and until now they are suffering without proper necessities. They were affected due to the relocation...” (R 11)

“...There was no proper plan to displace the Indians. For example, the houses of the Indians (in estate) were taken away. Among Indians, only 20% do better than the Chinese and Malays. The middle class, about 40% are struggling. Remaining 40% are suffering as they fall under lower income group. There should be same policy for all poor people. Mahathir was very racist...” (R 13)

“...He didn't neglect other culture. He just left them to other leaders of the community. Chinese community to the Chinese leaders and Indians to the Indian leaders. He has never promoted other cultures. He has never attended Indian cultural events. He thinks that the Malays need more help than other races and left out the Indians. He had no visions for the Indians...” (R 16)

“...One of the things Indians lacked during Mahathir's era is job opportunities. Government sector opportunities were partially controlled by him. Right up to the bottom like Majlis Daerah. He introduced a policy where for every five persons hired in the government, only one has to be a non-Malay...” (R 2)

“...in government services completely retrieved. This has limited Indians' job opportunities in government sectors. This situation led to social issues such as gangsterism among Indians. It also caused fragmentation of the estates. They have done good and bad. The good part is that, those who bought some portions of the estates are doing well now. While those who left with the amount of money given to them went to cities and quarters and they are still struggling...” (R 2)

“... The Indians were not given enough job opportunities. The percentage of Indian workers in government sectors reduced from 20 percent to 5 percent in

local council. Those days, most council staff were Indians but now, you can see only one or two, or none ...”(R 2)

“...Mahathir’s leadership is very ethnic-centric. He wrote about the Malay dilemma in 1969. You need to understand his ideas about the Malays. He felt bad looking at the condition of his own community in Malaysia. He was a great thinker and tried his best to develop the Malay community, but slowly it affected other races negatively...”(R 23)

“...When he took over the leadership in 1990s, the Indian community in the plantations were very much involved in the estate (rubber-tapping) work. He didn’t put any effort for the betterment of the Indians. After colonialism, the estates were taken over by multinational companies which were controlled by the government as they were headed by local CEOs. Although the companies were linked to government, it didn’t benefit the estate community. The same structure of colonial was kept even after the colonial...”(R 4)

“...No, the Indians suffered the most under Mahathir’s leadership. He used Samy Vellu as a medium to control the Indians. He did not address socio-economy problems among Indians. He weakens Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) as a political party. For instance, the employment and positions of Indians in the government sectors, we could see that the Indians suffered a lot...” (R 5)

“...Secondly, the Islamisation concept introduced was not purely based on the Islamic values alone. It was political Islam which was originally developed by middle east countries. Islam is a political tool to take control over the majority

population in power. So Mahathir's Islamisation was to secure power. As a result, the minorities were marginalised. He created a massive disaster to the secularism of this country. As a result, we have two different systems, which are the Syariah and Civil court. They just set up ad-hoc programmes. All the policies introduced failed the Indians. The need was to have equal opportunities for Malays, Chinese and Indians. But he wanted to place Malays on top and he wants to be in power..." (R 8)

To support the discussion above, informant 15 argued that Mahathir's leadership communication affects all kinds of parties and he didn't stop the Indians from practising religious activities. The Indians were marginalised but, it was also across the board. Furthermore, informant 19 perceived that Mahathir was a great leader. The informant highlighted that Mahathir put lots of hard work and effort but didn't deny that the marginalisation of Indians did happen during Mahathir's rule. In addition, informant 3 said that Mahathir failed miserably and marginalised the Indians. The informant expressed his disappointment that for 22 years, Mahathir didn't do anything for the Indians. Lastly, informant 7 also clarified that Mahathir's visions focuses on development but did not inspire Indian as they were still marginalised.

Lastly, informant 22 also conceded that Mahathir's leadership communication also neglected the minorities group in Malaysia, specifically the Indians. The informant said that he prefers Mahathir's style as a leader. However, his leadership was focused on developing one community and thus, neglected the other communities.

To support, in the interview, informant 4 asserted that:

“...No, because his aim is to develop the Malays and not all the ethnic groups thus, I don’t see him as a leader for all the communities in developing the nation. The racial politics is still happening today. If he would have been a good leader, he should have integrated some ideas of Tunku Abdul Rahman where the people were more racially integrated. I can’t accept him as a role model...” (R 4)

#### 4.6 The Indian Culture that Influence Indians’ Perception towards Tun Mahathir’s Leadership Communication

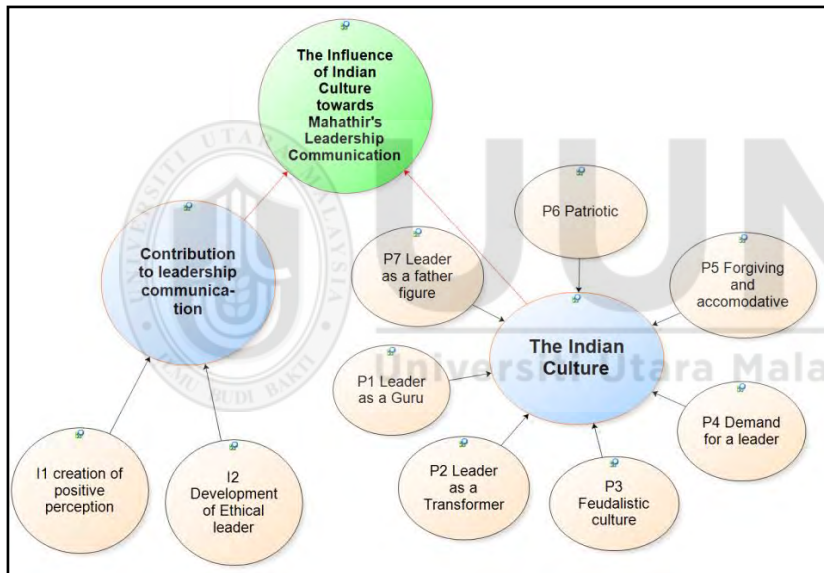
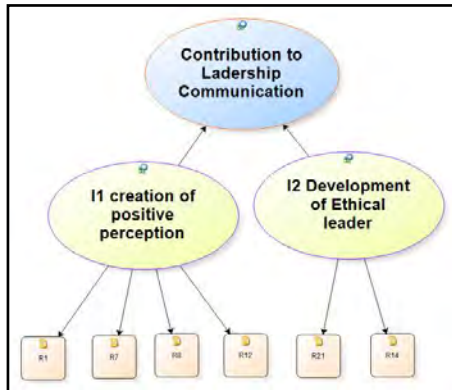


Figure 4.5 Main Themes and Subthemes of the Indian Culture that Influence Indians’ Perception towards Mahathir’s Leadership Communication

As an illustration of this, in figure 4.5, the NVivo analysis output indicates a few subthemes that could explain the Indian culture that influences their perception towards Tun Mahathir’s leadership communication.

#### 4.6.1 The Contribution to Leadership Communication



*Figure 4.5.1* The Contribution to Leadership Communication

In the interview sessions, informant 1, 7, 8 and 12 strongly conceded that culture creates positive perception among followers towards leadership. As evidence, informant 1 said that values create perception towards people, especially politicians. Leaders are the pioneer who passed our civilization to others. For eg. Raja means a leader.

Secondly, informant 7 expressed that cultural values do play a part in this. Other than that, the leaders allow religion to impact their community's perceptions and acceptance towards leaders. In addition, informant 8 agreed that cultural has a great impact in the way we perceive leaders, which is the same with the Malays too. It is an example of feudalistic.

To support the discussion, informant 12 said that:

“... I think the cultural values do affect the perception towards leaders, especially those who are strong in religion and hold strong cultural values in life. For example, putting hard work to achieve aspiring ambition. This shows

that many Indians have progressed on their own and not through the leaders...”

(R 12)

Besides that, the informants also clarified that Indian culture instill moral values among followers, which leads to the development of ethical leaders. As such informant 14 and 21 stated that culture makes better leaders. Our culture teaches all good values. Both of the informants asserted that discussion on religious values/philosophy is very broad. It teaches us to fight back if you face a corrupted leader and obey an ethical leader. For instance, in Mahabharata and Ramayana, Indians are taught to be obedient towards leaders and fight against negativity.

#### 4.6.2 The Indian Culture

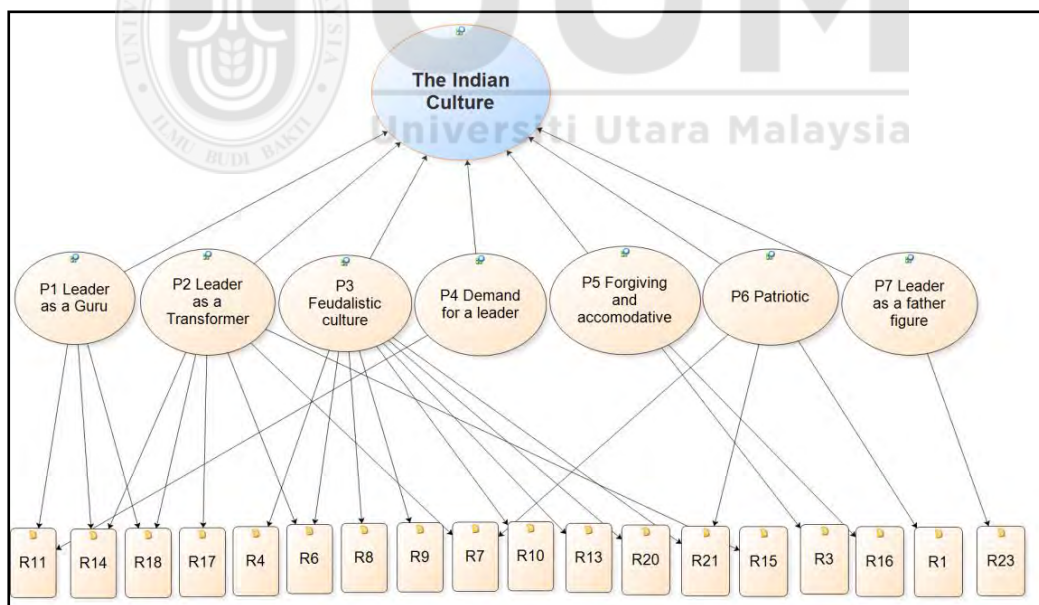


Figure 4.5.2 The Indian Culture

As an illustration of this, in figure 4.5.2, the NVivo analysis output indicates a few subthemes attempt the Indians culture that influences the Indians’ towards Mahathir.

Informant 11, 14 and 18 answered that the Indians always need a ‘Guru’ (mentor/teacher) to advance to a better level, thus they perceived Mahathir as a ‘Guru’ who guided them towards betterment. According to informant 11, Indian culture requires the followers to obey the ‘Gurus’, and listen to them no matter right or wrong. Since Mahathir had reached that status, the Indians believed whatever he said. Consistent with the arguments, informant 14 explained that everyone needs a mentor. According to informant 14, everyone needs advice, especially during difficult situations. Even Donald Trump has a mentor. Mahathir too will talk to his cabinet ministers first before delivering message and information to the members of Parliament.

This situation was also supported by informant 18 who asserted that a leader should possess qualities of the Great Indian Gurus such as Swami Vivekananda and Ramakrishna who always provided guidance to their followers to succeed. Informant 18 said, “Hinduism strongly influences Indians perception towards leaders. A leader should be like Vivekananda and Ramakrishna. Those ‘Gurus’ taught good values and always guided us towards betterment; to some extent, Mahathir is also guiding us”

Second sub-theme is transformer of the community or agent of change. Informants stressed that Indians always perceive leaders as a transformer of the community who is able to develop the nation or society towards betterment. In the interview session, informant 14 explained that Mahathir’s ideas of development were good and the ideas can be associated or similar with the ideas stated in Indian literature. Furthermore, informant 15 discussed that in 22 years of Mahathir’s leadership, he transformed the country in many ways. Informant 14 and 15 said that the Indians believe Mahathir’s development ideas were as good as ideas stated in Indian books. All that he

mentioned in his speech about development could be related to Indians' thinking and the informants believe that Mahathir adopted the ideas from Indian books. They also believe that leadership communication can bring a lot of changes. They explained that in 22 years of Mahathir's premiership, significant changes that affect our lives from young generation to older generation took place. They highlighted that Mahathir transformed the country in many ways compared to other prime ministers.

Informant 18 also claimed that he loves Mahathir's transformational quality and labeled Mahathir as a transformational leader who brought many developments and improvements. Informant 18 classified Mahathir as transformational leader. The informant indicated that Mahathir brought many developments and improvements such as Vision 2020. Informant 18 also highlighted that he loved the way Mahathir transformed the country by brought a lot of development and transformed the country for world's recognition.

Besides that, informants pointed out that the feudal culture in Indians made them submissive and fearful towards leaders and thus, they are feared Mahathir. This situation is evident in the discussion of informant 10 and 13. Informant 10 said that the Indians are submissive, and they are fearful towards leaders. They perceive Mahathir as a dictator. After he left (stepped-down), the Indian leaders managed to remove the fear among Indians. Besides that, informant 13 also said that the Indians have the blind respect for the leaders and the awaking comes after 2007.

To support, informants said that:

“... Indians who came to Malaya from India were products of great civilization. They have stronger Indian cultural values and were more cohesive,

organised community. They were poor and came for survival, so the cultural values were stronger. They were respectful to elders, hardworking and responsible. There were very few fights, no gangsterism and alcoholism...”

( R 20)

“...Yes, Indians have the feudal mentality and we don't challenge our leaders. For instance, Samy Vellu controlled the voice of the Indian community. Indians were obedient and never fought with leaders, and that was one of the reasons why Indians were brought into Malaya...” (R 21)

“...So the feudalistic attitude is if you are a leader, your words are given importance. The society is divided into two - leader and non-leaders. So the feudal system are in Indians. The Indians from the colonial era was brought into Malaya as labor force. Their condensing in plantation sector created non-rebellious, subservient, obedient, and hardworking group of people. That culture is very much embedded in Indians...” (R 8)

“...As an Indian we must do something for our community. If every Indian can do that, it will be very good. We can say that it is a part of our culture. A leader must be able to do something for the community; he must think about the people. And Mahathir did that. Mahathir proved that he can contribute to the people...” (R 9)

To support the arguments, informant 10 asserted that the Indians are submissive and fearful towards leaders. They perceive Mahathir as a dictator and thus, they feared him. However, after he left (stepped-down), we (Hindraf) managed to remove the fear towards leaders among Indians.

Furthermore, informant 4 discussed about the history of Indians who came to Malaya as the estate workers and how the caste system among the Indians contributed to the submissive culture. Informant 4 said:

“Historically, those Indians who were brought to Malaya were victims of caste system. Caste system was a system introduced by a foreign culture and later was addressed as Hinduism. Hinduism is a foreign religion which was consciously used by Hindu kings or religious people to make us docile or submissive...” (R 4)

Informant 6 also claimed that passive, submissive and fear towards the authority was embedded in Indian culture. In the interview session, the informant explained that, “they were passive and submissive, fearful of the authority until HINDRAF came into the picture in 2007. For instance, my father was from Mahathir’s era and I know he wouldn’t vote for any party other than Barisan Nasional (BN). They were very submissive and passive. He may have felt obligated to vote for the government. I believe that is our culture. Despite telling him not to vote for BN, he still voted for them” (R 6)

Besides that, informant 11 answered that there is always a demand among Indians to have a leader and this is perceived as the Indian culture.

“...Of course, you can see a leader in Mahathir. You need a leader for everything and that is Indian blood. In India, they needed a Maharaja, Zamindar, Panneyar (village head). They saw Mahathir as a leader. SamyVellu and Mahathir worked at the same time. People compared them positively and negatively. They were fond of the values in Mahathir

compared to SamyVellu. The Indians saw Mahathir as a leader who helps the Indians. In Ramayana / Mahabharata, there was also a need to have a leader. You need a leader who is knowledgeable to guide the people. In Ramayana, we had Rama as a leader. People listened to him and made change in policy. They never gave up. Among Indians these qualities are always there...” (R 11)

Being accommodative and forgiving is another sub-theme established based on the findings. It was found that the Indians are accommodative to others. Informant 3 and 16 pointed out some examples from the ancient Indians literatures and history which reflect the accommodative nature of Indians. Informant 16 expressed that he was proud of Indians who have this habit of volunteering when help is needed. When a person needs help, it could be anywhere like road accidents, Indians will volunteer to help as it's a part of their culture.

To support, informant 3 said that:

“...Definitely, the Indians are very accommodative and forgiving. When you look at our history; the Indians (Dravidians) lived in Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa 3500 years ago. They lived in a planned city with proper facilities including good drainage system. And then, the Aryan came without food to eat, dress to wear and land to cultivate. They realised the Indians were very accommodative, had good hospitality and forgiving. Hinduism teaches about love of god and service to mankind is service god. We can't be aggressive and basically that is our value which has become our weakness. Then, the Aryan took control and we became very insignificant. Indians who came to Malaysia were very loyal people and the British took a ride on us yet we were respectful towards them. It is in our value system and the same

situation occurred during Mahathir's time..." (R3)

Next, informant 7 discussed patriotism as a culture that influences the Indians' perception towards Mahathir. The study found that the Indians culture always perceives that a leader as an individual who loves the nation and shows high commitment towards his work and nation.

"...Indians want a patriotic leader as its roots back to the Indian culture, epic and mythology where patriotism reflects the quality of a leader. Mahathir's leadership communication targeted more on the Muslims and Malay community. However, he had his own way of making other races feel good about themselves and he did that by condemning his own race. For instance, he wrote a book titled "Melayu Mudah Lupa" (Malays Forget Easily). His leadership communication towards Indians was done through Samy Vellu as I mentioned earlier..." (R 7)

The response of informant 7 was also supported by informant 1 and 21 who stated that Indians showed support towards Mahathir's leadership because of their loyalty towards their leader. They explained that the Indians have a strong belief in leaders. They explained that culture is about being a loyalist and hardworking. In Mahathir's era, the Indians had a strong group that supports Mahathir. Mahathir needed votes and the Indians supported and were loyal to him. According to the informants, the Indians were the vote bank for his party. The informants claimed that Mahathir made use of these qualities in Indians. They were obedient towards Mahathir, so he didn't face many issues.

Informant 23 classified leaders as fathers and Indians saw Mahathir as a father figure.

As evident informant 23 stated that:

“...I perceived him as a father because he is a father of the nation. I benefited from his ideas and development. When we look at our family, we love our father because he is the leader of the family. The same concept applies here. The way we develop a family is similar to the way a leader develops the nation. When we talk about multiracial country, the challenges are more. Mahathir was able to adjust that and developed the nation...” (R 23)

#### 4.7 Response to Tun Mahathir’s Leadership Communication

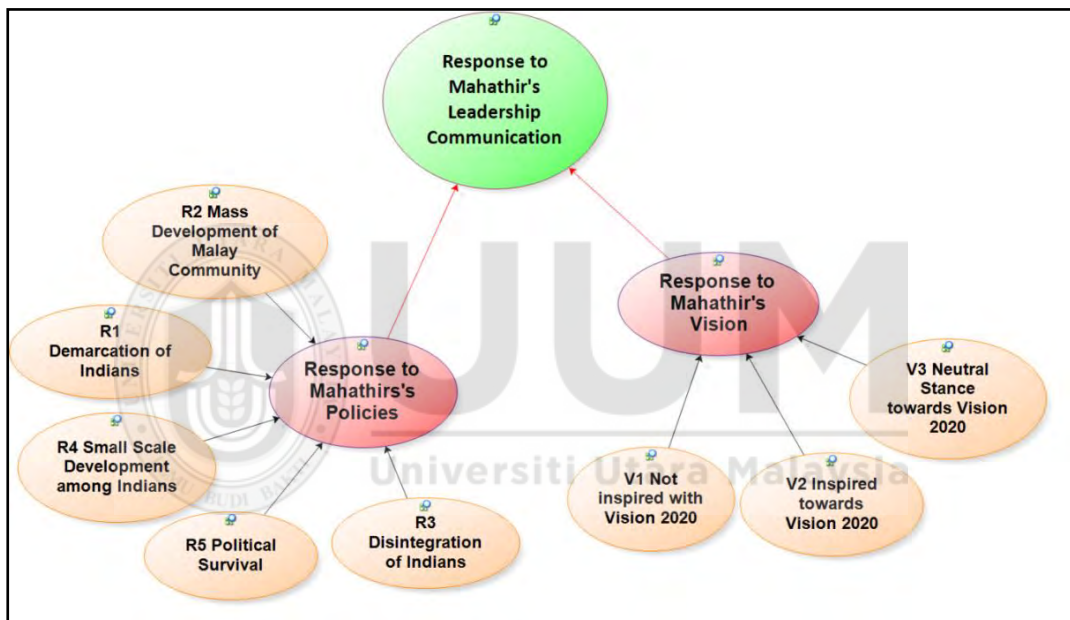


Figure 4.6 Main Themes and Subthemes of Responses to Tun Mahathir’s Policies

As an illustration of this, in figure 4.6, the NVivo analysis output indicates two subthemes to explain the response to Mahathir’s leadership communication specifically in terms of Mahathir’s vision and policies.

#### 4.7.1 Response to Mahathir's Policies

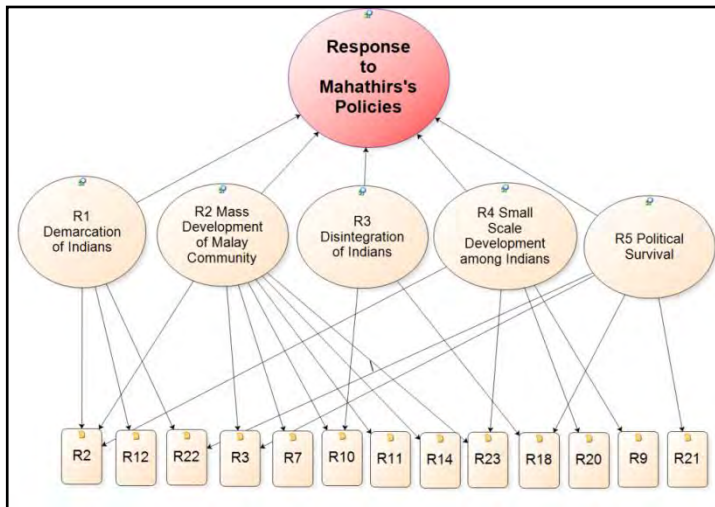


Figure 4.6.1 Responses to Mahathir's Policies

Figure 4.6.1 illustrates the Indians' responses towards Mahathir's policies which could be explained through the subthemes identified.

Eleven informants stated that Mahathir's policies caused demarcation among Indians in Malaysia.

“...you see, when we look at his leadership for 22 years, he always focused on his Malay culture. He criticised the Malays, yet he helped them because he knew that they needed help, but it happened at the cost of other races especially the Indians and Chinese. The Chinese didn't have much problem because they were economically, socially and politically strong. But the Indians were poor. They were the losing party because they were not very educated too...” ( R 11)

Informant 13 stated that Mahathir's leadership has taken the Indians back to 30 years. There were no specific policies for Indian community. Najib did more than Mahathir and there was no initiative during Mahathir's premiership. Furthermore, informant 4

indicated the after effect of Mahathir's policy. The informant explained that Mahathir gave equal power to Syariah court which leads to a lot of conversion issues and the Indians were stuck between Syariah and Civil court.

In their interview, informant 20, 21 and 22 explained that:

“...But if you ask whether Mahathir's leadership has helped Indians to come out of poverty, I think the major concern was the restructuring of plantations (estates). It leads to other kinds of challenges. NEP prioritised the Malay community while the Indian community below the poverty line did not benefit. The government felt that plantations (estates) were not their responsibility. So, it was a major weakness...” (R 20)

“...He contributed to marginalisation of Indians, indigenous communities and rural Malays through his policies. During Mahathir's time, industrialisation and development were rapid and the plantation lands (estates) were taken away and replaced. Indians lost their lands and were relocated without proper necessities. They ended up as urban pioneers. Majority of those Indians became gangsters until today. In that sense, Suaram tried to handle the issue, not only focusing the Indians but also the indigenous community. Most Indians suffered without basic needs...” (R 21)

“...No, Mahathir's leadership was an era where Islamic principles, values, and policies were implemented. The developments of the Bumiputeras were emphasised. Indians were marginalised and a lot of double standard practice could be seen. I would say the policies and modernisation process by Mahathir has caused a lot social issues among Indians such as gangsterism. For an

example the displacement of Indians from estate. When they were displaced, they came to urban areas, but they have no source of income, job and, etc. They were helpless and involved in gangsterism and etc. Education wise, during Mahathir's era, the merit system replaced quota system. The merit system itself is biased as it doesn't serve all the same. If a Bumiputera student gets CGPA 3.0, he or she can enter University Malaya however, for Indian students they must obtain more than 3.0 to enter Universiti Malaya and it resulted the number of Indian students intake to University drop to 4%-5%..."

(R 22)

The findings also indicated that Mahathir's policies were focused on mass development of Malay communal. Based on the interview sessions, informants indicated that Mahathir's policies were aimed to uplift the Malay community, although there were some Indians who benefited from it.

Informant 10 indicated that the policies introduced by Mahathir favored the Malays. There was Bumiputra agenda where the country's economy was channeled to one community. Informant 11 also said that during Mahathir leadership, the economic policy favors the Malays. Informant 11 said that Mahathir was openly sided the Malays and was more autocratic compared to Najib. Mahathir even had the power to amend the constitution. He had the guts to decide and implement it. To support the arguments, informant 2, 3 and 14 explained that Mahathir promoted Malay values and Malay agenda. Mahathir also wanted to give more opportunities to the Malays.

"...His policies were aimed to uplift the Malay communal. I would say that Mahathir has managed to uplift the Malay communal especially in economic status. Recent statistics show that 42 percent of GLC companies' shares are

controlled by the Malays. That shows the economic status of Malays. Who led them to this situation? It was Mahathir...” (R 23)

In addition, informant 7 asserted that Mahathir’s leadership communication targeted the Muslim and Malay community more. However, Mahathir had his own way of making other races feel good about themselves, Mahathir did it by condemning his own race by saying “Melayu mudah lupa”.

Informant 10 also highlighted the disintegration of the Indians as one of the impacts of Mahathir’s policies.

“...He had fragmented the estates. The government didn’t give much opportunity for the Indians. Estates were fragmented without proper benefits given to the Indians such as temples and houses. Then the Indians bought houses in residential areas but couldn’t afford to pay and ended up being bankrupt. This happened because Mahathir as a leader didn’t give the Indians better options. He didn’t show better prospect for them...” (R 10)

Despite that, informant 2 and 9 indicated that Mahathir’s policies did brought some developments to the Indian community in Malaysia but in a small scale. They expressed that Mahathir communicate his plans well through his speech. As far as the Indian community is concerned, Tun Mahathir has made the country progress. Many Indians benefited from his leadership.

“...He had done something; we cannot say that he didn’t do anything to the Indian community. It was partially successful. Certain policies we can accept. Sixty percent of his policies can be accepted and 40 percent we cannot accept because it was against our will. One is education, and the second is the

privileges for the Malays which we cannot accept. For instance, the Bumiputera issue. Personal experience; he came and sit in front of me and asked me, do you all want to become a Bumiputera? I was shocked and I answered him; “why not and for your information without the Indians and Chinese, Malaysia would not have developed.” For example, the rubber plantation, railways, and highways were built by the Indians. Chinese were brought in to do mining work...” (R 9)

“...We must understand Mahathir’s policies. during Mahathir’s years, some Indians benefited from the system. For instance, through the contract system, the Indians received certain percentage of profit. Mahathir made some billionaires; Indians, Chinese and Malay billionaires. So, the elites emerged...” (R 20)

“...The development of Malaysia was based on the framework that was established by Mahathir. Mahathir built confidence among Malaysians to develop (progress). The policies that Mahathir introduced were aimed to development the nation. For instance, the development of KLIA and Putrajaya were Mahathir’s development plan...” (R 23)

Moreover, informant 3, 18, 21 and 22 stated that Mahathir implemented various policies such as Islamisation policies for political survival. As evidence, during the interview sessions, they said that:

“...All these were done to remain in his position. He implemented all his ideas/policies for the country in order to stay in power. That’s the main agenda. He slowly got rid of the non-Muslims in the government sectors. Those days

the boss (high post government servants) were Indians and they respected him (Mahathir)...” (R 18)

“...Implemented many policies such as Islamisation policy which was for political purpose. In politics, he faced a few challenges, especially from PAS which was influential. He introduced the Islamisation Policy to get Muslims’ support. It brought a great impact to non-Muslims. As evident, we can see a huge gap between Muslims and non-Muslims in government agencies. He also wanted the Muslims to be leaders in government agencies...” (R 21)

“...Mahathir has implemented Islamic policies in Malaysia. He portrayed Malaysia as an Islamic country to get Malays’ support. He used it as a political tool to get support. He emphasised on Islamic policies to show the supremacy of Islam. We can see that from the decreasing number of Tamil schools from a total of 800 to 500 schools...” (R 22)

“...Again, it was for his selfish aim. In 1980s, Anwar Ibrahim was a very famous Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM) leader. He (Mahathir) brought him to UMNO. Being a very charismatic man, Anwar promoted Islam and wacana Islam to youths. Mahathir let him to do that for his survival. Islamisation concept came in and I’ll blame both of them for it. It happens at the expense of others...” (R 3)

#### 4.7.2 Response to Mahathir's Vision 2020

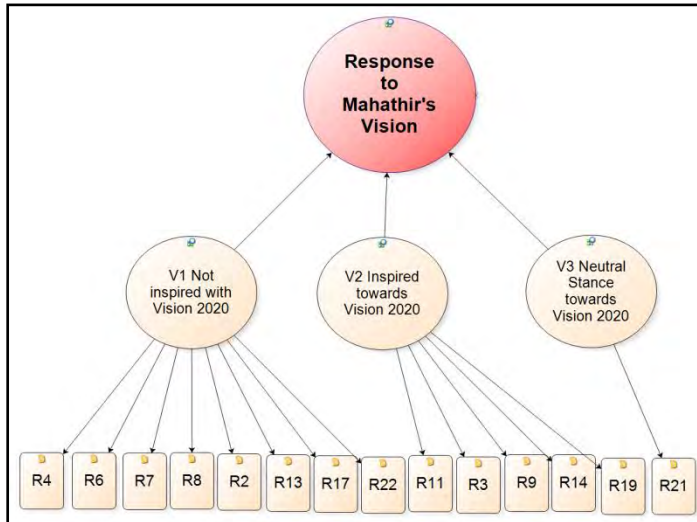


Figure 4.6.2 Response to Mahathir's Vision

Figure 4.6.2 shows the responses to Mahathir's vision. This theme attempts to explain the Indians' responses towards Mahathir's Vision 2020. Based on the interview sessions, this study found that most respondents feel that they are not inspired with Vision 2020.

In the interview session, respondent 4 said that vision 2020 did not inspire him because it does not develop the nation as a whole and it focuses on physical development. It was clear in the following excerpt:

“...No, it is a vision which encourages private enterprises and doesn't develop the nation as a whole. It only focuses on GDP, FDI and there was a huge disparity between the rich and poor. He wanted to bring up the ruling class and set his mind on that. He didn't target to build the nation, so there is no sincere leadership...” (R 4)

Informant 6 also said he was not inspired with vision introduced by Mahathir especially Vision 2020 which he classified as a political rhetoric. Informant 6 said:

“...No and since the beginning, I was not inspired as it's a lie to divert our mind and attention. Vision 2020 was introduced in 1990s to divert minds (of the people) from current issues. They talked about the future and the past, but current issues were not discussed...” (R 6)

Furthermore, informant 7 also said that the visions introduced by Mahathir especially Vision 2020 was focused on development and does not inspire him. It is because the Indians are still considered marginalised. He added that Mahathir's election manifesto did not give priority to the Indians. Informant 8 also clarified that he was not inspired with Vision 2020 by indicating that the vision he introduced was not a vision for the people. Informant 8 explained that Malaysia population is very small, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and income don't justify the Malaysians' standard of living. Informant 8 concluded Vision 2020 is a total failure.

Informant 17 also stated that he is not inspired with Vision 2020 by indicating that it was for political purpose and it was not in line with “Masyarakat Penyayang” concept. Vision 2020 gave a cut throat to “Masyarakat Penyayang”.

Lastly, informant 22 stated that Vision 2020 is a way of implanting an idea in peoples' mind. It is modernism and I am not inspired by it. The basic Identification Card issue among Indians is still not resolved. As a Hindu, the Indians were proud of Mahathir, and they were inspired by Vision 2020 introduced by Mahathir. Indians were emotionally affected with Mahathir's leadership and his vision until they realised about their marginalisation.

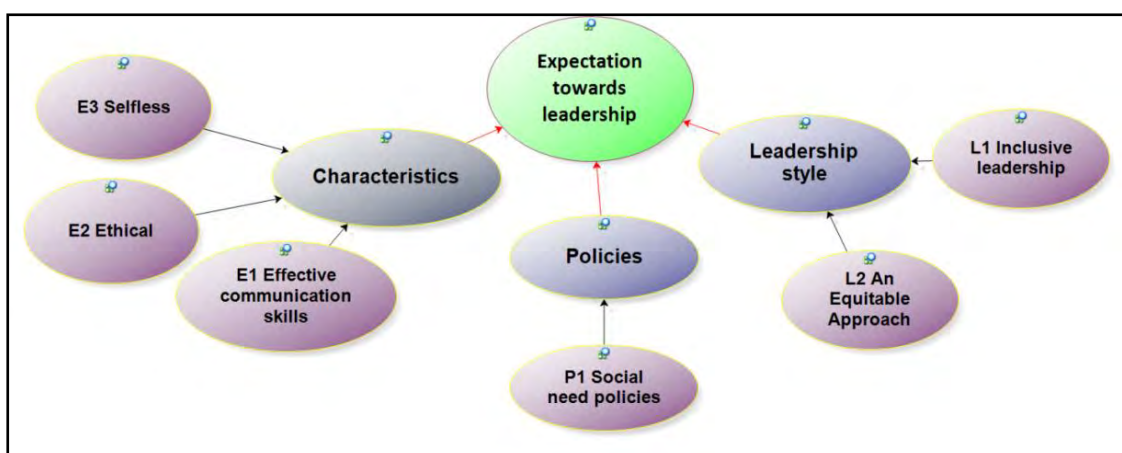
Next, the data analysis indicated that some of the respondents were inspired with Vision 2020 introduced by Mahathir.

This scenario is explained by informant 3, 9, 11, 14 and 19. They said Vision 2020 is very inspiring and gives you a feeling a long term planning. It is inspiring and its values reflect at Look At East Policy and it is good for the future. They also expressed that besides Vision 2020, Mahathir’s ideas such as Amanah Saham, Tabung Haji, and Koperasi also inspired them. Furthermore, they also indicate that many of Mahathir’s visions were used by Chinese, and were applied in different ways.

One of the informants took a neutral stance towards Vision 2020. As evidence, he said that:

“...About Vision 2020, its a yes and no for me. In the beginning, people have no alternatives, so they accept it. After looking at other alternatives, I don’t think Mahathir had a vision for the country because his vision aimed to uplift the capitalists only and not everyone...” (R 3)

#### 4.8 Expected Leadership Communication Qualities of Indian



**Figure 4.7** Main Themes and Subthemes of Expected Leadership Communication Qualities of Indians

Figure 4.7 shows that expected leadership communication qualities of the Indians could be explained through the sub-themes identified in the figure above.

#### 4.8.1 Characteristics

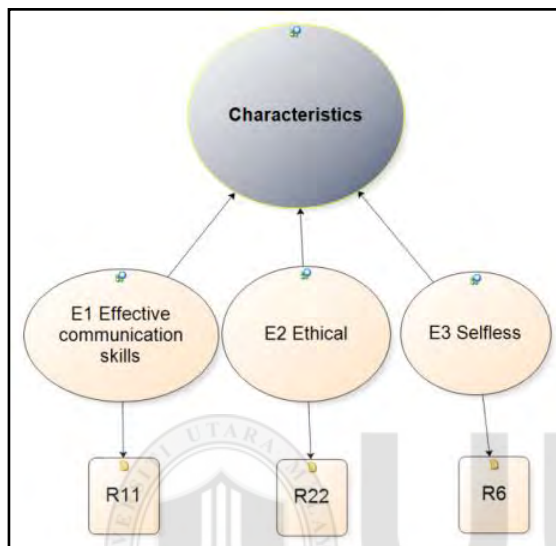


Figure 4.7.1 Characteristics

Figure 4.7.1 shows the main leadership communication characteristics expected by Indians which is the effective communication skills.

In the interview session, informant 11 explained the importance of effective communication skills for followers.

“... message with full of information, well prepared and rehearsed. The way messages are delivered such as communication and eye contact are also important. A leader needs to personalise his speech, and body language also plays a big role...” (R 11)

Other than that, informant 22 highlighted about expectation for an ethical leader who is free from corruption. In a short but telling statement, informant 22 said:

“... cannot because Mahathir is not an honest leader. Most corruption happened during Mahathir’s leadership; and inflation rose too. The economic gap between the rich and the poor became wider. He was corrupted. The Dharma concept in Hinduism states that when a country does not have an honest leadership and corrupted, it is moving towards failure.” (R 22)

Lastly, informant 6 conceded that a selfless leader who ultimately serves for the betterment of the community is vital. As evidence he said that he wants to see a sincere deliver. According to informant 6, some politicians promised to build schools five years ago, but nothing happens. This is only happening to Indians. They (politicians) can promise, but don’t deliver. Therefore, he wants to see it being done (R 6)

#### 4.8.2 Leadership Style

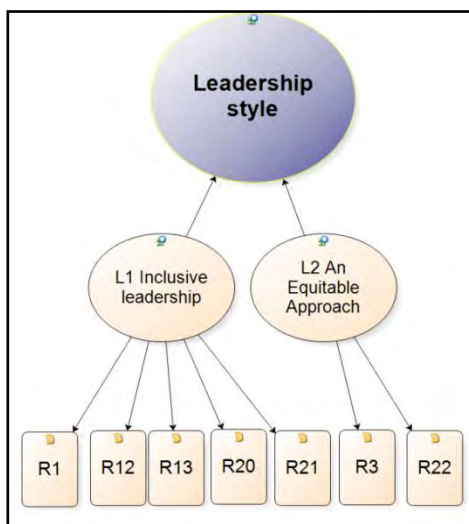


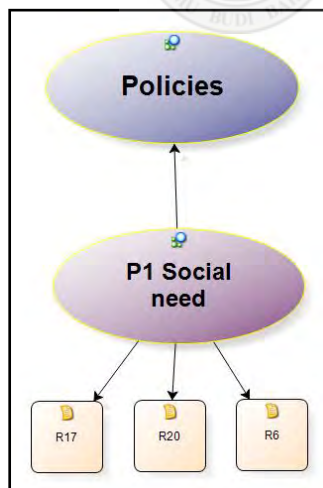
Figure 4.7.2 Leadership Style

Figure 4.7.2 indicates the leadership style expected by the Indians.

In terms of leadership style, informant clearly asserted that inclusive leadership is needed. As evidence, in the interview session, informants said that one should not be selfish which means, one should not practice divide and rule and marginalisation. The informants clearly indicated that Mahathir's model could only work if his subordinates represented and got closer to the Indian community and focused on their needs for the future as this can improve any leader's communication for the success of the entire Indian community (Inclusiveness).

Consistent with the idea, informant 3 and 22 stated that they need a leader who practices equality among people. As evidence, they said that the concept of Dharma in Hinduism could not be found in Mahathir's leadership. Mahathir should have taken care of everyone based on their needs. Not only the Indians, but also the Sabahans and Sarawakians. A leader must be fair to everyone. ” (R 3)

#### 4.8.3 Policies



*Figure 4.7.3 Social Policies*

Figure 4.7.3 shows the Indians' expected policies in Malaysia. In terms of policies, the Indians in Malaysia were expecting social policies. In the interview session,

informants said that they require the government to implement social policies. As evidence informant 17 and 20 said that it is not about communication. It is about policies to help people. Mahathir is a good communicator but there was a large group of people who didn't benefit from his policies. Even in Najib's era it remains the same. Forty percent of people who belongs to the 'bottom' group did not benefit. We can't put all the Indians into one same group because they are all different. Their family background influences their life. Lastly, informant 6 said that the policies should be based on needs not race.

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

In summary, this section reported the findings of the study. The present study identified six main themes and they are - Indians' conception of leadership communication, characteristics of Tun Mahathir's leadership communication, Mahathir's leadership communication for social change, the Indian culture that influence Indians perception towards Tun Mahathir's leadership communication, the Indians' responses towards Mahathir's policies and vision, and expected leadership communication characteristics of the Indians. The next chapter will discuss the six themes developed in the present study in-detail.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION**

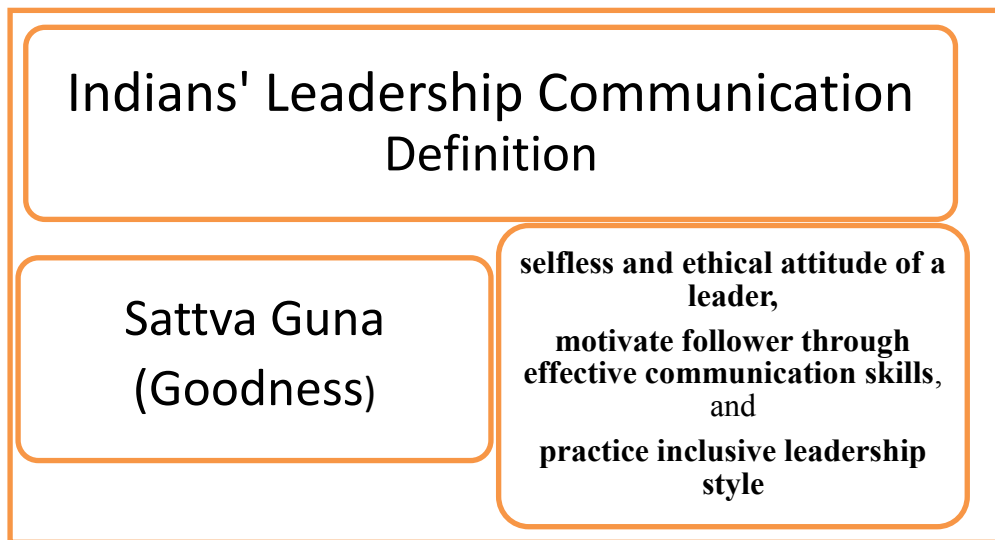
#### **5.1 Introduction**

This section discusses the outcome of the analysed data. This study aims to investigate Mahathir leadership communication from the Indian cultural perspective and social change contexts.-

#### **5.2 Indians' Leadership Communication Conception**

This study began by exploring Indians leadership communication conception. This section will discuss the three main ideas of leadership communication conception which are - definition of leadership communication, characteristics of good leadership communication, and the functions of leadership communication. Consistent with the idea by Bass (1990), and, Paramova and Blumberg (2017) who stated that leadership conception varies based on cultural context, this section analyses leadership communication conception based on the Indian cultural context. It provides an insight on the leadership communication conception perceived by the Indians.

### 5.2.1 Definition of leadership communication



*Figure 5.2.1* Indians' Leadership Communication Definition

Figure 5.2.1 indicates the Indians' definition of leadership communication. The definition developed could be associated with the Indian vedic philosophy, Sattava Gunas (Goodness). Based on the findings of the present study, the Indians have indicated three main ideas in defining leadership communication which are positive attitude, effective communication skills, and inclusive style. In terms of positive attitude, the study found that fulfilling promises and being ethical are important components of leadership communication. Secondly, in terms of effective communication skills, leadership communication involves effective communication between a leader and followers including the establishment and articulation of vision to the community and nation, being an active listener and able to construct and deliver messages effectively. Third, the style in managing and controlling followers. The finding of the present study pointed out that leadership communication involves participatory leadership style which encourages the participation of people in the leadership communication process. The definition of leadership communication provided by the informants of the study could be associated with the definition

provided by Barrett (2014) who defined leadership communication as a purposeful process of transferring meaning aimed to influence people through effective communication skills and establish positive relationship with followers by guiding, motivating or inspiring them to action. Analysing the definition provided by Barrett (2014), there are three main components of leadership communication which are found to be consistent with the definition reported in the present study; transferring meaning (communication skills: translating visions), establishing positive relationship (positive attitude: fulfill promises to people) and motivating followers to achieve shared goals (leadership style: participatory leadership). This discussion also could be associated with Bhagavad-Gita which categorises people based on three attributes; “sattva”, “rajas” and “tamas” (Chinmayananda, 2003). It was found that the definition provided by the Indians could be associated with sattva which emphasises on the qualities of a leader as a person who possesses positive qualities such as selflessness, aims to attain shared goals or vision, and works for the good of the people. The “sattva” attributes reflected by a leader is considered as ethical characteristics that inspire followers and create positive perception among them. Based on Agarwalla, Seshadri, and Krishnan (2015), “sattva guna” reflects transformational leadership communication that leads to change. In short, leadership communication could be defined as a process of showcasing selflessness and ethical attitude of a leader by motivating followers through effective communication skills and practicing inclusive leadership style which encourages feedback, suggestions and comments from followers. It was discovered that the Indians prioritised the aspect of ethicalness, effective communication and inclusive leadership style in defining leadership communication. It was also discovered that although Malaysian Hindus are the one of

the minorities, but the components that they have highlighted are universal values which are applicable into the modern context.

### 5.2.2 Characteristics of good leadership communication

Sattva Gunas		
1. Positive Character of a leader	2. Leadership Style of a leader	3. Communication Action of a leader
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selfless (karma)</li> <li>• Problem-Solver (daksyam)</li> <li>• Ethical (sattva-samuddhi)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusiveness (Yagna)</li> <li>• Critical (Buddhi Yoga)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fulfill promises (Satyam)</li> <li>• Control and manage (yoga)</li> <li>• Self-sacrificing (Brahma-bhuta)</li> <li>• Intellectual (buddhi)</li> </ul>

Figure 5.2.2 Ingredients of good leadership communication

Figure 5.2.2 indicates the ingredients of good leadership communication. The present study found that Indian community ingredients for good leadership communication comprise three main ideas. The findings of the study indicate that the Indians emphasise on the positive characteristics of a leader such as selflessness and being a problem solver and ethical. A leader should communicate sincerely with the masses and work without expecting rewards, which means a leader should be able to communicate his or her ideas, vision, and policies in the interest and need of the masses for the betterment of the society and nation. A sincere communication, which aims for the betterment of people, will help a leader to establish and maintain positive

relationship with followers. A selfless leader is expected to be able to identify and solve problems pertaining to the masses. The present study clearly found that a leader needs to identify the problems in the society and solve it accordingly. In regard to that, the Indians highlighted that a leader should not be corrupted and his or her leadership should be transparent. This is because the informants believe that a leader should lead by example, thus, it is important for leaders to be ethical which includes being transparent in his or her work. Transparency is perceived as a very important component of ethics by Indians as it provides a space for followers to judge the ethics of a leader. It includes management skills of a leader and his or her involvement towards an action. According to a study conducted by Sinha and Kaur (1992), it is stated that the qualities that reflect “sattva guna” are transparency, passion, and betterment. Thus, this study found that transparency element that is highlighted by the study’s informants is relevant with “sattva guna” of the Indian philosophy. It found that transparency boost the confidence of followers towards a leader.

The second component of the characteristics of good leadership communication is leadership style. This study classifies inclusiveness or participatory leadership and being critical as the components of good leadership communication characteristics. The study discovers that a leader should practice inclusiveness which means he or she should treat the community as one without neglecting any particular group. Regards to that, a leader should be willing to get feedback, suggestions and treat the community equally. In order to practice inclusiveness, a leader needs to be critical, which means he or she should be analytic in evaluating issues arise. A leader must able make a rationale decision based on his judgment towards certain situation. This characteristic also coincides with characters in Bhagavad-Gita which emphasise

on social inclusiveness. In his writing about Bhagavad-Gita, Davis (2014) stated that the birth of Lord Krishna reflects social inclusiveness as he was born in a tribe of cow herders which was a marginal community and not as a Brahmin or Kshatriya.

The third component is communication actions. It is important for a leader to produce positive outcomes from his leadership communication process. Hence, a leader should always fulfil his or her promises to the people. This quality is important to gain the confidence and trust from the people. Other than that, a leader must be able to control and manage different situations related to economy, social, and politic because it reflects managerial skills of a leader. Therefore, in order to manage effectively, a leader should be intellectual or knowledgeable person in most areas. Lastly, this study also discovers that good leadership communication characteristics involve selflessness. This means a leader should prioritise his commitment or duty towards people more than his personal matters. To be selfless, a leader needs balanced emotional quotient. This is to ensure that a leader is able to make a wise and ethical decision without any biases. As highlighted in Bhagavad-Gita, one should perform their prescribed duties by being an example and doing good for others (Bhagavad-Gita 3: 20-21).

In summary, based on the Indians' Hindu spiritual perspective, the characteristics of good leadership communication consist of the practice of participatory leadership style, good ethics and effective communication. A leader with these characteristics able to motivate, inspire and create confidence among people towards social change. Based on the idea established, this discussion found to be relevant to the Indians' religious philosophy that was emphasised in Bhagavad-Gita whereby a leader encourages followers to give feedback, be an effective

communicator, courageous and visionary, and practices a good ethics. These characteristics will inspire and motivate followers to become better in attitude and behaviour. Interestingly, it was found that Indian culture has a significant effect on the characteristics of a good leadership communication which are culturally specific characteristics. It was discovered that if a leader able to portray cultural-specific characteristics, he or she able to influence his or her followers effectively. It was found that Indian philosophy influence the mental make-up of the Indians which affect their attitude and behaviour towards leadership communication.

### **5.2.3 Functions of Leadership Communication**

This section discusses the functions of leadership communication from Indians' perspective. The present study found two vital functions of leadership communication which are - identifying the needs of the people; and motivate and create confidence. This study found that an effective leadership communication skill enables a leader to identify the needs of the followers. As per the discussion in the previous section about good leadership communication characteristics, a leader who has all the characteristics stated above will be able to establish a strong relationship with his or her followers. Thus, he or she will be able to understand the root cause of each problem faced by the followers. Furthermore, effective leadership communication also would help the leader to motivate and create confidence among followers. Effective leadership communication skills would inspire and persuade followers towards goals or visions established by their leader. It was found that followers will be motivated if the goals or visions established by a leader are consistent with their

needs. Regards to that, a leader will be seen as a trustworthy individual who is able to lead them.

In short, the discussion in the previous three sections could be compared with the discussions provided by Barrett (2014). Barrett (2014) stated that leadership communication refers to the process of projecting a positive leadership ethos. Barrett further explained that ethos refers to the set of characteristics of a leader which are judged by the follower. It was found that the characteristics of a leader, which are similar to the way the followers perceived, will inspire and motivate them. It was discussed that a leader with positive ethos such as charisma and ethics will make the followers trust in the leadership. In Indian philosophy, this study discovered that the findings could be explained by the philosophy of Karma-yoga discussed in the Bhagavad-Gita. Karma refers to the action that one engages with body, mind and speech, and yoga refers to a device or intelligent method (Mulla & Krishnan, 2010). Karma-yoga has outlined three main ideas which are the sense of duty to others, no desire for rewards, and calmness towards surrounding. Basically, Karma-yoga encourages an individual to have wisdom and perform duty without expecting remuneration. In their study, Mulla and Krishnan (2010) found that Karma-yoga make better leaders as it enhances “sattva guna” which refers to working for the betterment of others. Consistent with the idea, through the present study, it was found that the unique Indian culture and philosophy influence the Indians perception on leadership communication. In short, a leader who possesses “sattva guna” will be duty-oriented (Karma-yoga) and reflects the positive leadership communication qualities which will influence people towards betterment and development.

### **5.3 Mahathir's Leadership Communication for Social Change**

Based on the discussion, it can be concluded that transformational leadership communication leads to betterment among followers. Many studies examined Mahathir's leadership (Lynn-Sze & Ahmad, 2017), however only limited studies examined the influences of his leadership communication towards social change of his followers. Therefore, this section contributes to the discussion of Mahathir's leadership communication in social change context. Study conducted by Figueroa, Kincaid, Rani and Lewis (2002) indicated that effective leadership communication provides foundation in community participation which is an important indicator of social change. In another different study, Mai and Akerson (2003) stated that to ensure effective leadership communication, there are a few elements that a leader should take into consideration. Firstly, a leader needs to be a community developer who is able to provide a positive environment for the people. They clearly stated that leaders should use a storytelling approach to convey their trust and visions to the people. Furthermore, it was stated that a leader needs to project honesty and transparency, which are important in leadership communication. Secondly, the leader needs to provide a clear direction for the people to achieve visions or goals. The writings indicated that a leader should not only explain the goals, but also persuade people towards achieving the goals. In short, a leader should ensure he or she gains the empathy of the people. Lastly, a leader should also create a positive environment that encourages communications between people specifically an environment that allows people to discuss about changes that would happen. Regards to leadership communication for social change, this section discusses Mahathir's leadership communication in the context of social change from Indians' cultural perspective. The

findings of the present study have identified that Mahathir's leadership communication skills contributed to social change among Indians towards development.

In this study, it was evident that Mahathir is a transformational leader who was able to bring significant and indisputable development to the nation. It was undeniable that the Indians developed as the nation developed. Although marginalisation issue pertaining Indians was highlighted by the informants, and many studies classified Mahathir as an ultra-Malay, this study found that the Indians have progressed under the leadership of Mahathir. Mahathir's leadership communication was found to lead social change among the Malaysian Indians. Consistent with that, some respondents strongly asserted that Vision 2020 introduced by Mahathir was able to inspire them to develop and set their goals higher. They also did not deny that the Indians also benefited from the policies introduced by Mahathir although those policies introduced favoured the majority community of the nation. For instance, they have highlighted National Development Policy which benefitted the majority community compared to the minorities. However, the middle class and rich Indians were benefitted through the implementation of the policy. This idea is consistent with the quality of a transformational leader who urges the followers, including the Indians to think collectively about the long-term needs and be sensitive to their needs. By doing this, the followers can become leaders and be empowered to reach the visions that were established.

It was also discovered that in the context of social change, Mahathir was a transformational leader who was able to stimulate social change among the Malaysian Indians. To further understand Mahathir as a transformational leader, based on the

four components of transformational leadership, the four 'Is' (individual consideration, idealized influence, inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation), Mahathir's leadership communication was explored. Firstly, Mahathir established relationship with people. It was discovered that Mahathir as a leader was able to communicate well with the Indians and established positive relationship with them. Based on the findings, it can be clearly seen that Mahathir was an effective communicator. Regards to that, high communication competency of Mahathir significantly created a good rapport with the Indians. This situation could be associated with a previous study conducted by Gilbert and Matviuk (2008) which highlighted the three main components of effective leadership communication which are; the leader, followers and the interaction between them (Gilbert & Matviuk, 2008). Also, Barrett (2014) discussed that effective leadership depends on effective communication of a leader with his or her followers. In short, communication is identified as the substance of leadership. This means interaction with followers lays the foundation of establishing relationship with people. In general, Mahathir was identified as a leader who communicated his visions, ideas, and policies effectively with the community.

Secondly, the findings of the present study found that Mahathir's leadership communication was able to identify issues pertaining to Indian community. In the process, he motivated and built confidence among people to bring social changes in society. This situation is an evident through the social change happened among the Indian community. Although there are critics about Mahathir's leadership communication, however, the Indians recorded a significant improvement in various field. This situation proved Mahathir as a leader who implemented most of his policies and visions. His actions, charisma and approach show his capabilities as a

leader. However, informants of the study did not deny that there was some lacking in his leadership communication. They have highlighted that the marginalisation of the poor Indians was significant under Mahathir's leadership. However, they were still motivated with his leadership communication quality to develop the society and the nation. This is consistent with the discussion by Howell and Avolio (1993) who highlighted that transformational leader will motivate his or her followers to transcend their self-interest for the sake of the community improvement. In short, this study found that Mahathir's leadership communication created a positive environment that established positive relationship with followers, and that motivated them towards social change.

In conclusion, this study found the three main components of Mahathir's leadership communication that leads to social change among Indians; establishment of relationship through effective communication, motivation and confidence building, and development. In short, Mahathir's leadership communication possesses effective communication which helped to create relationships, motivate, build confidence and inspire people to develop.

#### **5.4 Characteristics of Mahathir's Leadership Communication**

This section begins by exploring the characteristics of Tun Mahathir leadership communication from Indians' perspective and relate them to the concept of transformational leadership, specifically the four I's discussed by Bass and Avolio (1994). Based on the findings, it can be clearly concluded that the Indians in Malaysia classified Mahathir as an effective communicator. Mahathir as a leader was able to communicate his ideas, visions, and policies effectively to his followers. He was able to communicate using simple language, localise the content of his message, and

provide facts to support his arguments or ideas. Such qualities enable Mahathir to influence people from different layers of the society. For instance, informants highlighted a situation where Mahathir initiated the concept of Asian values due to international democratisation. He also initiated extensive economic activities and maintained political stability in 1990s before the economic turmoil in July 1997 which affected the Asian countries badly (Naisbitt, 1997). Thus, the mentioned communication capabilities have made Indians to believe him. This is consistent with the concept of leadership communication which states that communication is the substance of leadership communication process (Vries, Bakker-Peiper, & Oostenveld, 2010) and envisioning which refers to the process of establishment and articulation of vision. Envisioning can be categorised in two; the vision construction and vision delivery (Holladay & Coombs, 1994). The idea of communication as the core of leadership communication was also supported by scholars (Awamleh & Gardner 1999; Frese et al. 2003; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Riggio et al. 2003; Shamir et al. 1994; Towler, 2003). Leadership communication literature defines that effective leadership communication as a process of transferring messages effectively from a sender to receiver. As evidence, the Indians claimed that Mahathir was able to send the messages across effectively. His communication skills attracted people to listen to his speech.

In analysing Mahathir's effective communication skills based on the transformational leadership, it was discovered that Mahathir's leadership communication strongly related with the transformational leadership communication dimension of inspirational motivation. This dimension involves process of communication, including construction and articulation of appropriate visions to the

people. It was discussed that right visions would motivate and inspire followers to be committed in achieving the visions introduced by their leader. In this process, a leader has to provide a clear guideline on how to achieve the visions through his effective communication. Consistent with the idea, it was evident that Mahathir as a leader has introduced many visions consistent with the needs of Indian community. Furthermore, Mahathir communicated his expectation with the people to motivate and inspire them.

According to Smith, Peterson, and Schwartz (2002), visionary refers to the process of communicating vision which is an integral component of leadership communication and it is culturally relative. And without an effective communication, a leader is unable to communicate visions to his or her followers. The current study discovered that Mahathir did not only establish various policies for the nation but also communicated the policies well to the people. In addition, it was found that Mahathir has motivated people through his visions and policies which can be seen throughout his 22 years of leadership. His efforts were discussed by scholars such as Gomez (in Ahmad, 2010), who argued that during his leadership, Dr. Mahathir well-packaged government ideologies, policies and concepts in a form of public campaigns to gain support from both general and segmented publics. Based on the findings of the study, the informants consistently indicated Mahathir as a visionary leader who is futuristic and provided a hope for the society for the future. In addition, this idea is also relevant to the discussion of Bhagavad-Gita which pointed out about ethics of actions and speech. Bhagavad-Gita has indicated that one must ensure his action and speech, or communication is truthful and secondly, fault finding attitude should be avoided. Consistent with the idea discussed in the Bhagavad-Gita, this study found that the Indians are influenced by Mahathir's leadership communication as he provided facts

and reasonings in his speeches which enabled the people to rationalise and accept his ideas.

In addition, the present study also found that Tun Mahathir was a community transformer or agent of change. The data analysis indicated that Mahathir is a leader who addressed his concerns about the nation. For instance, Mahathir realised the need of modernisation in Malaysia and he introduced many development policies which contributed towards development. For instance, policies such as Look East Policy which adopts Korea and Japan as models (Khoo, 1995), and the New Development Policy aim to create a balanced economy in the nation (Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister Department, Malaysia). His effort has been perceived by the Indians as an effort of identifying the needs of the nation. His effort has inspired the Indians who supported his policies. In 22 years of his premiership, Tun Mahathir has contributed to an extensive development to the nation which was not practical without his effective leadership (Taher, 2005). Mahathir has exhibited a very high determination to transform Malaysia. He defended his policies which were implemented during his leadership and that attitude reflects his leadership quality in addressing the needs of the people. For example, during the implementation of Privatization Policy, Mahathir explained, "previously, we tried to have a single [national] entity, but it caused a lot of tension and suspicion among the people because they thought the government was trying to create a hybrid" (Straits Times, 1995). This indicates that the commitment and determination of Mahathir's leadership in addressing the needs of the nation.

This aspect could be discussed with the transformational leadership communication dimension of idealised influence. Idealised influence refers to leaders'

charisma and it involves emotional quotient (Antonakis, 2012). It refers to the situation where a leader is perceived as a role model. This dimension is divided into two components; attribute component which refers to the characteristics assigned by followers to a leader based on the followers' perception; and secondly, behavioral component which refers to the leader's behaviour based on followers' observation. In general, this dimension discusses that a leader's behaviour leads to admiration, respect and trust which contribute to the creation of positive perception of the leader among the followers. Thus, Mahathir's leadership communication characteristics made his followers admire, respect, and trust him. Therefore, Mahathir was perceived as a charismatic leader by the Indians in Malaysia which influence them towards his visions.

Moreover, Mahathir has been labeled as a leader who possesses a strong personality. In 22 years of leadership (1981-2003), Malaysians have witnessed tremendous development and achievements. Khoo (1995) stated that Tun Mahathir also was one of the renowned Third World leaders in several ways, particularly in his effort and motivation in changing Malaysia into a fully-developed nation. Literatures highlighted that the core ideas of Mahathir's leadership were authoritative, and importance were given to community. The informants clearly indicated that Mahathir is a leader who walks the talk. For instance, during his premiership, he promised to build infrastructures such as Kuala Lumpur International Airport and Putrajaya and raise the economic status of the Bumiputeras. And he fulfilled the promises in a stipulated time.

This made the Indians perceived Mahathir as a leader who fulfill his promises. The Indians viewed Mahathir as a reliable and trustworthy leader. This is due to his

continuous effort in introducing and implementing various visions and policies for the nation in his 22 years premiership as the fourth prime minister (1981-2003). In 1990, Mahathir introduced the National Development Plan (NDP) to close the gap in the imbalanced development of ethnic groups. This idea was found to be more relevant with transformational leadership communication dimension of intellectual stimulation which states that a good leader implements new ideas and finds creative ways to perform a task. For instance, when implementing the Look East Policy, Mahathir motivated followers to adopt the work culture of countries like Japan and Korean, which aimed to bring a particular society towards betterment but without forsaking their own culture. This clearly indicates Mahathir's effort to encourage followers to challenge their status quo by thinking creatively. In addition, this discussion also found to be consistent with the philosophy in the Bhagavad-Gita which urges an individual to be determined in given work or task (Bhagavad-Gita 6:2). Bhagavad-Gita classified virtue or ethics into two; self-regarding virtues and other regarding virtues. Some examples of the self-regarding virtues are simplicity, determination, courage, sincerity and truthfulness. Examples of other-regarding virtues are non-violence, peace, forgiveness and charity. Thus, the Indians viewed Mahathir as a leader who possesses strong personality which is consistent with the ethics emphasised in the Indian culture.

Furthermore, this study concludes that Mahathir is an ethical leader. Based on the findings of the study, the Indians labeled Mahathir as an ethical leader because he portrays himself as a religious person. For instance, the findings indicate that his approach to integrate Islamic values in his leadership has created an image of a religious person among the Indians. Mahathir implemented Islamic policies,

institutions and practices such as Islamic Banking and International Islamic University of Malaysia. Moreover, the findings of this study also indicate that there was no financial scandal involving him during his tenure as the Prime Minister. Thus, Mahathir was perceived as an ethical leader. Ethics is stated as what leaders do and who they are, and it is a foundation which directs a leader. The idea could be associated with the discussion of Barrett (2014) who also indicated that it is important for a transformational leader to be an ethical leader. A leader needs to be ethical and take a good care of his or her actions in order to win trust among followers and ensure that they are receptive. Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) who stated that ethics is the foundation of transformational leadership communication.

Furthermore, they stated that good character, ethical values and morality are the three main components of transformational leadership communication. This indicates that ethical behaviour is an important component of leadership communication which influence the way followers perceive a leader. Relating to the four dimensions of transformational leadership communication, it was found that the discussion in this section is consistent with the transformational dimension of idealised influence which refers to leader's behaviour based on followers' observation. Relating to Indian culture, it was evident that ethics is an important element in Bhagavad-Gita. It was stated that an individual must perform his or her duty without expecting rewards. In Bhagavad-Gita, the concept of Karma-yoga discussed that one must perform the duties that have been allotted and receives no rewards for the results of his or her duties (Bhagavad-Gita 2:47). In short, it urges people to work selflessly by following the virtues highlighted in Bhagavad-Gita. This study found the Indians perceived Mahathir as an ethical leader because he showed high determination and

commitment in performing his duty as a leader and his actions were perceived as selfless because he was perceived as not corrupted, religious and a family man.

This study also found that Mahathir is a critical thinker. It was found that Mahathir was a leader who always challenged his environment. He was also seen as a leader who possesses a high analytic ability. At the same time, Mahathir also urged his followers to be critical about their surroundings. As evidence, he wrote “The Malay Dilemma” in 1970 which created many controversies. One of the purposes of the book was to urge the government to uplift the Malay communal who were the majority community in Malaysia. Other than that, he also criticised the government policies which did not favour the Malay community. This situation clearly indicates his critical ability towards different situations. This idea could be associated with transformational leadership communication concept, intellectual stimulation. It refers to the way a leader advocate changes in followers. Based on the findings, this study found that Mahathir’s ideas during his tenure were appealing and people were able to make sense of it. Thus, Indians were convinced and influenced by his leadership communication. Mahathir’s leadership communication was evidently aimed to create awareness of the importance of change or development. Through new policies and visions, he created a positive imagination for the future that generated thoughts and insights among followers. For instance, in 1991 Mahathir introduced Vision 2020 which outlined the goals to be achieved by the year 2020. At the same, Mahathir also has outlined the challenges that Malaysians have to face in order to achieve Vision 2020. This effort of Mahathir has been perceived as an effort to create awareness for the needed actions.

This situation is found to be relevant with the discussion in Bhagavad-Gita which requires people to act with great wisdom. Chapter 4 of Bhagavad-Gita discussed about the wisdom that one should possess in doing daily activities. This is because through great wisdom, an individual will be able to think rationally or in the best interest of a subject. It was found that Mahathir's critical thinking is consistent with the quality of being wise and able to think in the interest of people.

Mahathir was also found to be a trustworthy leader. Trust is one of the important components of leadership communication as it relies on the relationship between a leader and followers. According to Butler and Cantrell (1984), trust consists of five main elements. First, integrity which refers to honesty and truthfulness, second is competence which refers to the knowledge possessed by an individual when doing a job, third is consistency which refers to the adaptive nature in managing different situations, fourth, loyalty which refers to the art of motivating others and lastly, openness which refers to the process of sharing ideas freely with others. It was explained that a transformational leader will make his stance clear and provide consistent direction to his or her followers to create trust (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Thus, this study found that Mahathir's leadership communication perceived to be high in integrity which earned his trust, especially from the Indian community.

In addition, Mahathir was perceived as an honest and knowledgeable leader, adaptive to different situations, motivated followers towards his visions and communicated his ideas freely. This idea is relevant with the dimension of transformational leadership communication of individual consideration whereby a leader creates a positive environment for followers by giving personal attention and treats their needs carefully. In this sense, Mahathir was perceived as a coach who

helps their followers to overcome challenges. This will earn the trust of the followers. Hence, Mahathir's leadership communication was aimed to address the concerns of the people and nation which made followers to perceive him as a trustworthy leader. The action of Mahathir could be associated an incident in Bhagavad-Gita. In Bhagavad-Gita, Sri Krishna (the teacher) told Arjuna (his disciple) to trust in Him (Sri Krishna) and perform his duty as a warrior. In the battlefield, Sri Krishna provided advice and guidance to Arjuna about the needs to perform his duty and trust His teachings. In that sense, Arjuna perceived Sri Krishna as a trustworthy leader and followed his instructions. Relating to Mahathir's leadership communication, he was perceived as a trustworthy leader who was able to guide the Indian community and the nation towards betterment through the visions that he introduced in Malaysia.

Lastly, the present study found that Mahathir is sensitive towards cultural differences. It was found that Mahathir's leadership communication was very flexible and adaptive towards different situations especially in managing cultural differences. Mahathir found to be adaptive and flexible in managing crises particularly economic crisis. Mahathir has successfully managed the economic crisis in 1998 which saw him as a leader who is adaptive and flexible. Furthermore, studies also highlighted that a transformational leader will be able to manage cultural differences of his or her followers (Krishnan, 2002) and this element is relevant with the transformational leadership communication dimension of individualised consideration. Mahathir paid a special attention to the cultural differences of each ethnic group. As evidence, there was no major ethnic conflict during Mahathir's era and the cultural sensitivity was good during his leadership (Saad, 2012). Although Mahathir emphasised on the integration of Islamic values into both his administration and society but his effort

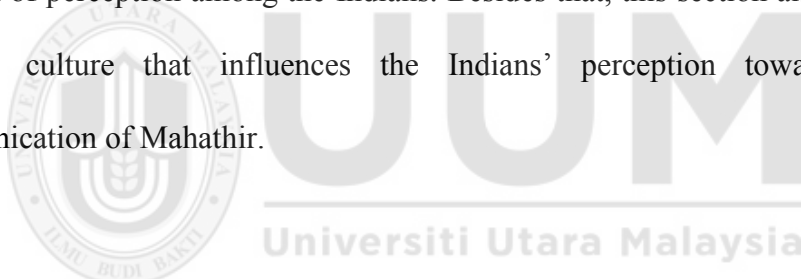
was taken into consideration by the non-Muslims in Malaysia and this reflects the cultural sensitivities of other ethnic groups (Ahmad Hussein, 2002).

Mahathir's effort to understand the needs of each cultural group shows his ability in managing his leadership communication. Therefore, this character found to be an inspiration by the Indians in Malaysia. Bhagavad-Gita mentioned a characteristic called 'Samabhava' which refers to the calmness in the mind of an individual. Mahatma Gandhi, who was the leader of the Indian independence movement against British rule stated that the word 'Samabhava' has impacted him a lot. Bhagavad-Gita asserted that the emotional maturity in facilitating the needs of others is very important and without the emotional maturity, one could not communicate and establish relationship with the people and the world. A transformational leader who is adaptive and flexible should possess a balanced emotional quotient which makes him a wise leader. Relating to Mahathir's leadership communication, it was found that Mahathir was a leader who was able to make a wise decision based on the needs of people and he had emotional maturity to facilitate the cultural differences, including the Indians.

Based on the discussion above, this study discovered that Mahathir is a transformational leader who shows the culturally-specific leadership communication that inspire the Indian community in Malaysia. The Malaysian Hindus perceived Mahathir's leadership communication as culturally relevant to the Hindu Vedic philosophy. Therefore, although there are many negative issues pertaining to Mahathir and the Indian community, such as the marginalisation issue, the Malaysian Hindu still accept and influenced by Mahathir's leadership communication due to the cultural specific leadership communication characteristics.

## **5.5 Influences of Indians' Culture towards Mahathir's Leadership**

Transformational leadership is influenced by culture and change in society would be successful when the leader is able to identify the culture of his or her followers. However, studies on transformational leadership theory in a multicultural context are indeed limited. For example, studies conducted by GLOBE clearly neglected the multicultural context. Consistent with the idea, scholars argued that the leadership outcome varies across cultural context or heterogeneous society. Therefore, it is important to investigate Mahathir's leadership communication from the Indian cultural perspective to provide a new dimension in leadership communication from a multi-cultural context. This section will discuss how Indian culture contributes to the creation of perception among the Indians. Besides that, this section also discusses the specific culture that influences the Indians' perception towards leadership communication of Mahathir.



### **5.5.1 The Contribution of Indian Culture to Leadership Communication**

In general, this study found that Indian culture acknowledging the ethical leader, and creates a positive perception among followers. Indian culture nurtures moral values in individuals, which helps them make rational decisions. Therefore, Indian culture also enables an to differentiate good and bad decision. For instance, the Bhagavad-Gita and Ramayana explain how one should morally lead his or her life. Bhagavad-Gita also teaches about the ethics of an individual.

Secondly, the Indian culture also emphasises on the creation of positive perception among followers. Effective leadership communication creates a positive image among followers which will later on inspire followers. These two main ideas

were consistent with the concept of leadership communication. In leadership communication concept, ethics and creation of positive perception among followers are important components of an effective leader. Leadership communication emphasises on the ethics of a leader that will enhance the integrity of a leader. Effective leadership communication skills could create confidence and induce belief among followers. In summary, Indian culture plays an important role in developing an ethical leader and contributes to the creation of positive perception among followers. For instance, Bhagavad-Gita emphasised on the importance of an individual to perform his or her duty without expecting any rewards. The rationale of this idea is to make sure that an individual is able to perform his or her duty sincerely (Bhagavad-Gita 18:45). Bhagavad-Gita also highlighted the virtues that one should follow in providing services to others which was identified as the roots of Hinduism and its culture. Thus, through the understanding and practices of Indian culture, it can be concluded that an ethical leader is able to create a positive perception among his or her followers. Therefore, the Indian regarded Mahathir as an ethical leader and duty-oriented which creates a positive perception towards Mahathir's leadership communication.

### **5.5.2 The Influence of Indian Culture in Creating Perception towards Mahathir's Leadership Communication**

This section discusses the values of Indian culture that influences the Indians perception towards Mahathir's leadership communication. The first theme identified from the thematic analysis process is guru. "guru" in Sanskrit means a teacher, and based on the research findings, this study found that leaders are perceived as "guru" by the Indians. This is because a "guru" plays an important role in a person's life by

equipping with knowledge and visions that could bring development in that person. The role of a “Guru” has been discussed in detail in various Indian ancient literatures.

According to Choudhuri (1997), a qualified leader shows the right path by giving proper instructions to followers. Thus, when followers choose an individual as their Guru, they will listen and follow his or her instructions without questioning. Similarly, in other ancient Indian literatures such as “Rig Veda”, “guru” is labeled as a “rishi” or “muni” (sage). “Guru” is also capable of bringing betterment in a person’s life. Similarly, another ancient literature, “Upanishads” stated that an individual is able to reach his or her aims or goals by receiving knowledge from a guru. The guru-shisya (Mentor-mentee) relationship was also depicted in Bhagavad-Gita, whereby, in the battle-field, Krishan (the Lord) asked Arjuna (the follower) to leave his worries and fully surrender to Him (Lord Krishna) (Mercanti, 2002). Specifically, this was also emphasised in Chapter 16 of Bhagavad-Gita which discussed that a leader should be a person who is able to guide followers towards betterment. Based on Bhagavad-Gita (Gita VI, p. 34) leadership refers to self-management and “Guru” plays an important role in guiding his or her followers. In conclusion, Gurus or mentors are individuals who help their followers towards transformation. Usually, Gurus bring transformation in their followers’ lives by sharing their lived experience in a powerful way (Cenkner, 1977). Thus, it was clear that a person who reflects his or her visionary character in order to provide betterment was perceived as “guru” by the Indians.

Regards to that, the Indians viewed Mahathir as a Guru who is able to guide the followers towards betterment by providing guidance through his leadership communication skills. He guided the society by establishing visions and short-term

plans such as the Five-Year Development Plan (Rancangan Malaysia), and long term plans such as Vision 2020, as well as various policies. Mahathir advised the people on how to develop themselves together with the nation. As a leader who led the country for 22 years, he created a strong confidence among Indians in Malaysia who believed that his advises are worthy to be followed. This idea also could be associated with the discussion by Rost (1993) who pointed out the role of a leader is to direct the followers' motivation towards a mutual goal or vision. In the discussion by Rost (1993), it was highlighted that a leader needs to work closely with his or her followers to achieve shared goals. The idea pointed out by Rost (1993) is relevant with the findings of this study which discusses that a student needs to work closely with his or her "guru" or mentor to attain goals set by the mentor for betterment. This idea found to be consistent with one of the characteristics of transformational leadership pointed out by Tichy and Devenna (1990) that leaders are visionaries.

As an evidence, in his study Muniappan (2007) highlighted about the visionary character of Sri Rama in Ramayana. He discussed that Sri Rama, the main protagonists of the Ramayana established vision for his people in Ayodhya before he left to forest. Sri Rama was perceived as a guide for the people of Ayodhya as he provided vision for the future. In this sense, Mahathir also reflected the similar characteristics of a "Guru" or transformational leader who established visions for the people.

Secondly, the demand for a leader. Since the ancient days, the Indian community was led by a leader, which can be clearly seen through the Indian social structure that is based on caste system. As stated by Mehrotra (2007), the caste system was identified as an organising principle and is very much embedded in Indian society

(Choudhuri & Chouhan, 2013). Naturally, social structure creates a division between leaders and followers. Furthermore, ancient literature, “Mahabharata” which was an interaction between leaders and followers, reflects the presence of a leader in different situations to guide his followers. Thus, the Indians also believe that full obedience by surrendering to a leader is a virtue (Sinha, 2000). Sinha (2000) also indicated that followers should possess two important qualities which are known as *sraddha* (utter faith) and *susrusa* (obedience). These qualities stressed on the importance of obeying the leaders and the needs of a leader in peoples’ life. It is evident that obedience and trust in leaders were embedded in Indians lives. Therefore, by realising the need of a leader, the Indians were obedient towards Mahathir during his leadership.

Based on the findings, respondents perceive Mahathir as a leader who guided the Indians towards development. The Indians had strong faith in Mahathir’s leadership communication and were obedient towards him throughout his 22 years of leadership. Although there were some issues pertaining Indian community under the leadership of Mahathir, the Indians consistently supported Mahathir which shows that they needed him as a leader. The finding is consistent with the idea of transformational leadership which classified a leader as a courageous person (Tichy & Devenna, 1990). In Ramayana, it was stated that Sri Rama was a courageous leader with strong personality as he took risks to fulfill his promise to his father before he went to the forest. Thus, the promise keeping nature creates strong faith among followers who have high regards on their leader. Based on the ancient literatures, the Bhagavad-Gita and Ramayana, the presence of a leader is prominent and importantly a leader is believed to be an incarnation of God. Thus, the Indians were always looking for a leader who they perceive as their God. Regards to that, this study found

that, the Indians perceived Mahathir as a courageous leader and thus, they need him to lead them.

The findings of this study found that Indians in Malaysia were accommodative and forgiving. This situation is relevant with the idea in the Bhagavad-Gita which emphasises that one should always forgive others (Bhagavad-Gita 12:13) which indicates the nature of the Indian culture. Furthermore, a study conducted by Sinha (2004) also discussed that the Indians tend to judge social phenomena based on three elements which are place, time and person and these were the reason why the Indians are accommodating. As evidence, in his study Lal (2006) stated that the Indians from India were employed as estate workers due to their nature which are adaptive, manageable and obedient. The Indians were accommodating towards Tun Mahathir's leadership by being loyal and supportive, which can be seen through the consistent support of Indians towards Mahathir's leadership in General Elections (1981-2003). A study conducted by Beng, Jayaratnam, and Guan (2008) indicated that the Indians prefer UMNO and MIC in the late 1980s than other political parties and this reflects Indians' loyalty towards Mahathir. This situation also can be understood through a study carried out by Bharti (1985) who asserted that the Indians perceive and examine a situation in all its complexities and trade off their personal interest and values which make them accommodating and forgiving. In a different study conducted by Muniappan (2007) discussed transformational leadership in relation to Ramayana. The study discussed idealised influence which is one of the components of transformational leadership. Idealised influence refers to behaviours that make followers to admire, get inspired and motivated. Relating to Ramayana, the people of Ayodhya were very loyal towards Sri Rama (the king of Ayodhya) and requested him

to return to Ayodhya from the forest. In the Bhagavad-Gita, it was pointed out in a few sections that one should always forgive others as it is a noble gesture (Bhagavad-Gita 10:4; 3:4; 16:3).

In Malaysia, Indians are classified as a marginalised group and access and privileges were denied in many sectors. However, they continued to give their support to the leadership of Mahathir due to the influence of Indian culture. They forgave and accepted Mahathir's leadership communication. Thus, this study strongly asserts that religious philosophy influences Indians' perception towards Mahathir's leadership communication.

Besides that, a leader was viewed as a transformer of the community or change agent who is able to bring developments to the nation which was an evident from the visions he established during his 22 years of leadership as the fourth prime minister. Based on the cultural perspective, the Indians were looking for a leader who shows high commitment in his work or nation. This quality has been emphasised in the Indian literature which discussed that a leader should sacrifice his or her personal interest in order to promote the well-being of the group that they are leading (Bhagavad-Gita 3:14). Consistent with the idea, Mahathir was awarded the status 'Father of Modernisation' showcased his efforts in transforming the nation towards betterment. The policies and visions that he implemented were aimed to change the nation and society which reflects his commitment towards his work. Furthermore, the Indians also perceived leaders as father-figures which could be considered as the influencing factor of their abiding nature. In other words, the Indians perceive a leader as an individual who is strict, father-like, demanding even at the cost of personal benefits. It was discovered that a transformer leader nurtures follower by guiding,

grooming, protecting and motivating them towards the visions introduced by the leader.

Since childhood, socialisation of most Indians happened in a manner such that, if a leader becomes a father-figure and fits into the nurturing characteristic, the Indians will accept and follow them. Thus, it was discovered that the Indians perceive Mahathir as a strict character who transformed the community, showed high commitment in developing the nation to a better level and always implemented his plans. Thus, Indians viewed Mahathir as a strict-father who wants his children (followers) to succeed. According to transformational leadership theory, a transformational leader will be able to create and provide a positive environment for the followers by understanding the needs of followers. In this case, transformational leaders are perceived as a coach who guides and motivates his or her followers. Transformational leaders are the change agents and he quoted a situation in the Ramayana whereby Sri Rama (the main character of the Ramayana) changed the kingship of Kiskhinda from Vali to Sugriva & the kingship of Lanka to Vibheeshana. Thus, the Indians perceived Mahathir as a transformational leader who has the ability to transform the community to betterment.

Furthermore, this study found that being submissive and fearful towards leaders also influenced the Indians perception towards Mahathir's leadership communication. Based on the findings, it was discovered that the Indians were submissive and fearful under the leadership of Mahathir. Indian culture discusses that leaders are extraordinary and thus, followers always look up at their leaders. This quality is discussed in the Bhagavad-Gita which emphasises that followers always give unconditional service to their leaders. Specifically, in Bhagavad-Gita, Arjuna

was told to give his service to the Lord without any hesitance (Prabhupada, 2003). This situation also could be explained by analysing the results of the general elections during Mahathir's leadership whereby the Indians consistently supported the leadership of Mahathir. This indicates the loyalty of Indians towards Mahathir's leadership. Some informants also associated this culture with the leadership Tun Samy Vellu who represented the Indians in Malaysia. Informants asserted that Tun Samy Vellu became the voice of the Indians in Malaysia which made the Indians submissive.

In other words, it was found that the ineffective role of Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) as a representative of the Indians contributed to the submissiveness of Indians in Malaysia. In short, the Indians had lesser medium of communication with Mahathir as it was only done through MIC. Relating to transformational leadership, Indian ancient literature the Valmiki Ramayana explains that there are a few styles of transformational leadership, which are "Sama", "Dana", "Bheda" and "Danda". "Sama" refers to the way of explaining to people using common sense and logical explanations. "Dana" refers to the explanation which provides an incentive. Thirdly, "Bheda" refers to selective discrimination and differentiation. Lastly, "Danda" is the use of force (Valmiki, 1995). It was found that Mahathir was perceived as a leader who uses force to motivate followers to reach goals. Some informants of the study classified Mahathir's leadership communication as autocratic. Even some pointed out about "Operasi Lalang" whereby many leaders were arrested under ISA. Thus, this study found that Mahathir's technique of using force to implement what he wanted, "Danda". Therefore, it was found that Mahathir's leadership communication is relevant with the transformational leadership highlighted in Indian religious

philosophy which influences the Indians towards Mahathir's leadership communication. In short, it was discovered that the Indian philosophy of the Malaysian Hindus affect their behaviour and attitude towards Mahathir's leadership communication.

## **5.6 Mahathir's Leadership Communication Attributes and Their Relevancy to Indians**

This study concludes that Mahathir's leadership communication could be analysed through the seven characteristics of transformational leaders listed by Tichy and Devanna (1990). Firstly, a transformational leader is a change agent. This situation could be associated with the character of Mahathir who was influential in changing the leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman. Mahathir was critical towards the leadership of Tunku and boldly criticised policies implemented by Tunku. Another instance can be seen in Mahathir's policies that emphasised industrialisation more than agriculture in order to develop the society and nation which was viewed as a positive effort by the Indians.

Secondly, transformational leaders can be assumed as courageous people. Mahathir was perceived as a determined leader in implementing his policies for the betterment of people and the nation. For instance, although he faced many criticisms during the implementation of various policies, he was very firm in defending his policies. In order to gain people's support, he explained the rationales of his policies to the people and country. Specifically, during the economic crisis in 1998, Mahathir took a good decision which saved the country from great economic turmoil by stabilising Malaysian currency (Wain, 2012).

Thirdly, transformational leaders could be described as believers in people. A transformational leader believes that the people are capable to accomplish task given. As such, Mahathir empowered people through the visions he introduced. He urged people to work hard and achieve the visions he introduced. For instance, he emphasised on a set of ethics for civil servants by making amendments to General Orders. The guideline of a new code of ethics stressed more on moral values and attitude of the civil servants which includes cleanliness, efficiency, and trustworthiness. The code of ethics serves as a guideline for government officers to ensure the efficiency of the government sector (Rais, 1988). In Ahmad Atory (2005). Mahathir also encouraged creativity and innovation. Consistent with the idea, Mahathir introduced the Multimedia Super Corridor in 1992 to speed up the process of achieving the objectives of Vision 2020 and transformed Malaysia into a better nation (Jeong, 2007). Thus, this programme emphasised creating a knowledge-based society which was aimed to cultivate creativity in people by providing wider access to information.

Next, transformational leaders are considered to be value driven. Consistent with the idea, Mahathir was perceived as a leader who fulfills his promises. For instance, Mahathir promised to build infrastructures such as Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA), Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC) and Putrajaya as a part of the modernisation process and he fulfilled the promises. He showed high determination and commitment to develop the society and nation.

Transformational leaders are lifelong learners which refer to the continuous self-learning and development. Mahathir, in his leadership era (1981-2003) appointed different panels of consultants to advise him on different matters. For instance,

Mahathir appointed a panel of economic consultants to advise him on issues pertaining to the economy. This reflects the characteristic of lifelong learning of Mahathir, who was willing to listen and receive advises and recommendations on issues pertaining to the nation.

Transformational leaders also have the ability to deal with complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty. Mahathir was perceived as a problem-solver. His policies and visions were aimed to solve issues pertaining to the society and nation. For instance, Mahathir has introduced the New Development Policy (NDP) to tackle socio-economic issues, specifically to sort economic imbalance between different ethnic groups which saw him as a problem-solver.

Lastly is visionary characteristic. Mahathir has introduced many visions for the people and nation, such as Vision 2020. Mahathir has established clear visions to transform the nation into a fully developed nation and communicated his expectations clearly to his people.

### **5.7 Responses to Mahathir's Leadership Communication**

This section discusses the responses of the Indians towards the Mahathir's leadership communication, specifically towards Mahathir's policies and Vision 2020. In general, there are claims stating that Mahathir's leadership approach including the policies he introduced were merely concerned on the development of the Malay communal until he was labelled as an ultra-Malay (Khoo, 1995). However, the statistics shows that the Indians recorded improvements in various sectors including politics, economy and social. Thus, this section discusses the responses of the Indians to Mahathir's policies

and visions. It provides an insight about what are the thoughts of the Indians towards Mahathir's policies and visions.

### **5.7.1. Mahathir's Policies**

In order to be a successful leader, people or followers' support is vital. Policy implementation is one of the ways to get the support of the followers. The policies introduced and implemented is an important component of leadership communication. It reflects the leadership communication skills of a leader, whether he or she understand the needs of the people and nation. In Malaysia, Mahathir has introduced various policies. This section discusses the Indians' responses towards Mahathir's policies. This study highlighted demarcation of Indians in Malaysia. The implementation of policies such as Islamic Policies by Mahathir has caused demarcation of Indians in Malaysia. Although there is a significant development in the Indian community in various sectors under the leadership of Mahathir, the policies implemented by Mahathir have caused the demarcation of marginally poor Indians. Furthermore, according to Ramachandran who is the Founder of Hindu Rights Action Force (HINDRAF), the Indians became the most affected community after the ethnic-based policies were implemented as it caused marginalisation of Malaysian minorities. During the Sixth Pravasi Bhartiya Divas (PBD) 2008, an event held to mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community towards the development of India, a senior delegate told that Islamisation is another way how the Indians get marginalised (10th January 2008, Times of India).

The implementation of policies by Mahathir was aimed to uplift the Malay communal. This situation can be analysed through the implementation of policies which favored the Malay communal at large. For instance, in terms of economy, the

idea of National Economic Policy (NEP) which initially incorporated national ideals of equality and justice, however, practically it contradicted with the national policy it propagated (Chakraborti, 1996). Through NEP and National Development Policy (NDP), the idea of Bumiputeraism also was institutionalised which provided economic autonomy to Malays. This caused two-thirds of Indians in Malaysia remained as poor laborers and only one-fifth of Malaysian Indians reached the middle class standing (Chakraborti, 1996).

Lastly, the estate worker displacement was one of the major impacts of Mahathir's policies. It was found that the largest number of estate worker displacement occurs under the leadership of Tun Mahathir. As evidence, in the Seventh Malaysia Plan, the rubber plantation areas were reduced drastically, which saw declines in employment in rubber plantations from 163 577 in 1979 to 13366 in 2004 (Eight Malaysia Plan, pg. 209.). This caused displacement of more than 300 000 estate workers from 1980 to 2000 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, Handbook of Rubber Statistics, 1985, Monthly Rubber Statistics Malaysia, May 2004). The displacement brought negative impacts particularly to the displaced estate workers who lost their jobs and their houses and that led to many social problems in the Indian community. In short, this study found that there was no specific policy implemented to address the issues which existed in the Indian community and the policies implemented by Mahathir affected the poor Indians in Malaysia. Furthermore, in his writing, Raman (2004) stated that Mahathir neglected and failed to include the Indians in his modernisation plans. Furthermore, Raman (2014) also discussed that Mahathir's modernisation plan were implemented by renouncing the estates in the expense of the Indians who lived there. In the process, the estate workers were relocated without any

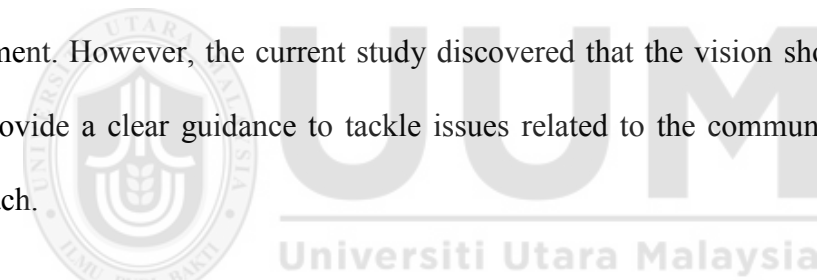
compensation, and proper necessities. There were also studies conducted to analyse the impact of the relocation. The studies discovered that the government then did not take proper initiatives to help the estate workers although there were proposals submitted to the ministry to solve issues pertaining to estate workers. Mahathir did not take any initiatives to do a proper relocation of the estate workers as no ministry was assigned in the relocation process. That's shows the biasness of the policies during Mahathir's administration.

Other than that, findings also show that Mahathir's policies were aimed for political survival. Based on the findings of the present study, it was found that the Indians perceived that Mahathir implemented various policies particularly the Islamisation Policy for political survival. This situation shows that Mahathir was capable in adapting his leadership communication based on the need or situation. Although a few of Mahathir's policies contributed to the development of the Indian community, it was discovered that the development happened in small scale and majority Indians did not benefit from the policies especially the lower income group (Bottom 40 group). This situation clearly indicates the struggles and agony of Indians in Malaysia before and after the independence which requires better or inclusive policies to improve the condition of the Indians in Malaysia.

### **5.7.2 Vision 2020**

Bennis and Nanus, (1985) asserted that leadership communication is a process which involves creating a compelling vision, articulating and sustaining the vision. In order to drive changes in the community, a leader needs to establish vision and articulate it effectively to his or her followers. Mahathir introduced many visions for the community and nation. One of the visions introduced is Vision 2020. Based on the

findings, the present study found that Indians were not inspired by visions introduced by Mahathir, specifically Vision 2020. It was found that Vision 2020 was primarily focused on physical development of the nation and did not address major issues pertaining the Indian community in Malaysia especially the economically poor Indians. For instance, there was a huge wealth disparity between the rich and poor people (Raman, 2004). Besides that, Vision 2020 is also found to be a political rhetoric which aimed to give people a sense of hope for a better future, which inspired some Indians as it was able to provide motivation and guidelines towards betterment. According to Howell and Shamir (2005), vision is perceived as a tool for a leader to motivate and provide hope for followers to progress. In this study, it was discovered that Vision 2020 was used as a tool to develop and motivate followers towards betterment. However, the current study discovered that the vision should be realistic and provide a clear guidance to tackle issues related to the community in a holistic approach.



Furthermore, this study found that vision 2020 was able to gain followers' attention and Mahathir as a leader articulated the vision well and but the vision was not sustainable as it did not address the grass root problem faced by the Indians such as poverty, educational opportunities, equal economic and social opportunities. Based on the findings, Vision 2020 received a good response from the Indian community in Malaysia when it was first introduced. However, upon the implementation the Indians realised that it did not address the main issues pertaining the Indian community. It could be concluded that Vision 2020 was not able to inspire majority informants of the present study. Only a few informants stated that the Vision 2020 inspired them as the vision provided a sense of hope for the Indians to develop.

## 5.8 Expected Leadership Communication Qualities of Indians

This study revealed the Indians' expected leadership communication qualities from three main aspects; characteristics, leadership style and policies. In terms of characteristics, the Indians prefer a leader with effective communication skills. Based on the findings, it was clear that effective leadership communication depends on the relationship between the leader and his followers, which is consistent with the views of scholars of leadership communication. It is evident that when a leader has a strong or family based-relationship with his or her followers, it smoothens the leadership communication process and creates stronger bonding between a leader and followers. The Malaysian Indians also expect a leader who communicates consistently with his followers from top to grassroots community. This is because, consistent communication provides a platform for a leader to explain all his ideas to the society and convince people to accept his ideas, and at the same time the people would be able to understand the actions of the leader. The Indians also highlighted that a leader should not only communicate when there is a need, but communication should happen consistently with followers from all categories on a regular basis.

Furthermore, the Indians also stressed on the ethical quality of a leader and sincere delivery. It was found that the Indians were looking for a leader who possesses high moral values that can serve as a role model. In short, they are expecting leader who is free from corruption. This is because a leader who works without expecting rewards would be able to serve the society well. According to Tichy and Devenna (1990), transformational leaders are value-driven. In his study Muniappan (2007) associated the character of Sri Rama in Ramayana whereby Sri Rama always kept his promises. It was highlighted that transformational leader or Sri

Rama was an ethical leader who projected high moral values. It was found that the idea pointed out by the Indians was consistent with the discussion stressed in Bhagavad-Gita, *nishkama karma* (selfless action). Furthermore, sincerity (13:7) has been pointed out as one of the virtues that one should practice.

In the aspect of leadership-style, the Indians expect an inclusive leadership style. The findings show that followers are looking for an inclusive leadership approach which allows the people to get involved in various decision-making process. The policies implemented should be more inclusive, by taking people's suggestions and needs of different communities into consideration. The followers want a leader who receives and considers feedback given by the people in the decision-making process. For instance, the Indians highlighted the Indian estate workers displacement which was massive under Mahathir's administration was executed without proper communication and studies on it. Thus, it resulted in a serious impact on the Indian community in Malaysia. The plights of the Indian estate workers were ignored during the displacement process. Besides that, the Indians also highlighted the need of a fair leader. The study found that marginalisation was one the major issues highlighted by the Indians. Therefore, they are looking for a leader who is able to provide an equal treatment to all the communities in Malaysia. The Indians expect for a leader who includes them into the mainstream development which allows them to taste better development. The expectation of a fair leader was also related with the leadership communication practices in ancient Indian literatures. For instance, in the Ramayana, Sri Rama encouraged people to give ideas or suggestions whether to provide refuge to Vibheeshana. Based on the suggestions or advice from the people, Sri Rama decided to provide protection for Vibheeshana. This is an example of inclusive leadership or

participatory leadership that was reflected in the ancient literature. The inclusiveness highlighted in the present study is also consistent with the idea emphasised in the Bhagavad-Gita (in Hee & Gurd, 2010). Bhagavad-Gita also stressed that a leader should play the role of a servant, which could foster inclusiveness (Rarick & Nickerson, 2008). Gita, XVII, p. 28 stated that works that done without faith or belief are meaningless. Thus, sincerity is very important to connect the need and deeds. In short, this will ensure that the integrity of a leader is always maintained.

This study found that Mahathir's leadership communication matches the transformational leadership characteristics from the viewpoint of the Indians in Malaysia. Mahathir was described as a charismatic leader, as he was able to motivate people towards his visions, provided ways to achieve the visions or goals and able to address people's concerns. The present study found that the Indian culture played an important role in influencing the Indians' perception towards leadership communication of Mahathir. Thus, it was found that the Indian philosophy influenced Indians mental make-up towards Mahathir's leadership. The Indians perceived Mahathir's leadership communication characteristics which were consistent with their spiritual values made them accept his leadership communication. However, as to create a holistic development, it was found that less attention was given to the Indian estate workers and poor Indians (B40) which made the Indians suffer (Raman, 2004). The present study would like to highlight that there was no special policies formulated for the Indians under Mahathir's leadership. This study also found that ethnicity played a pivotal role in Malaysian politics specifically when socio-economic policies were developed. This contradicts the study conducted by Khazanah Research Institute (2016) which claimed that ethnicity has no significant effect on moving up the income

ladder for B40. However, the present study argues that the policies implemented in Malaysia are still very much based on ethnicity. Therefore, ethnicity has an impact on the income level of the B40 group, especially the Indian community. Based on the responses of the Indians, the present study has developed a leadership communication model that is acceptable by the Indians. This model expected to serve as a framework for leaders to manage their leadership communication skills when they are communicating with the minorities particularly the Indians in Malaysia. This model is developed consistent with the urge of scholars to develop culture-specific leadership models. For instance, the GLOBE study highlighted the need of culture-specific leadership communication model. Therefore, this model is expected to be used as a reference by the present and future leaders to understand the culture of the Indians and formulate communication strategies including the establishment of new policies to stimulate social change in Indian communal in Malaysia. The established model is also expected to serve as an insight of the Indians experience towards the leadership practice in Malaysia.

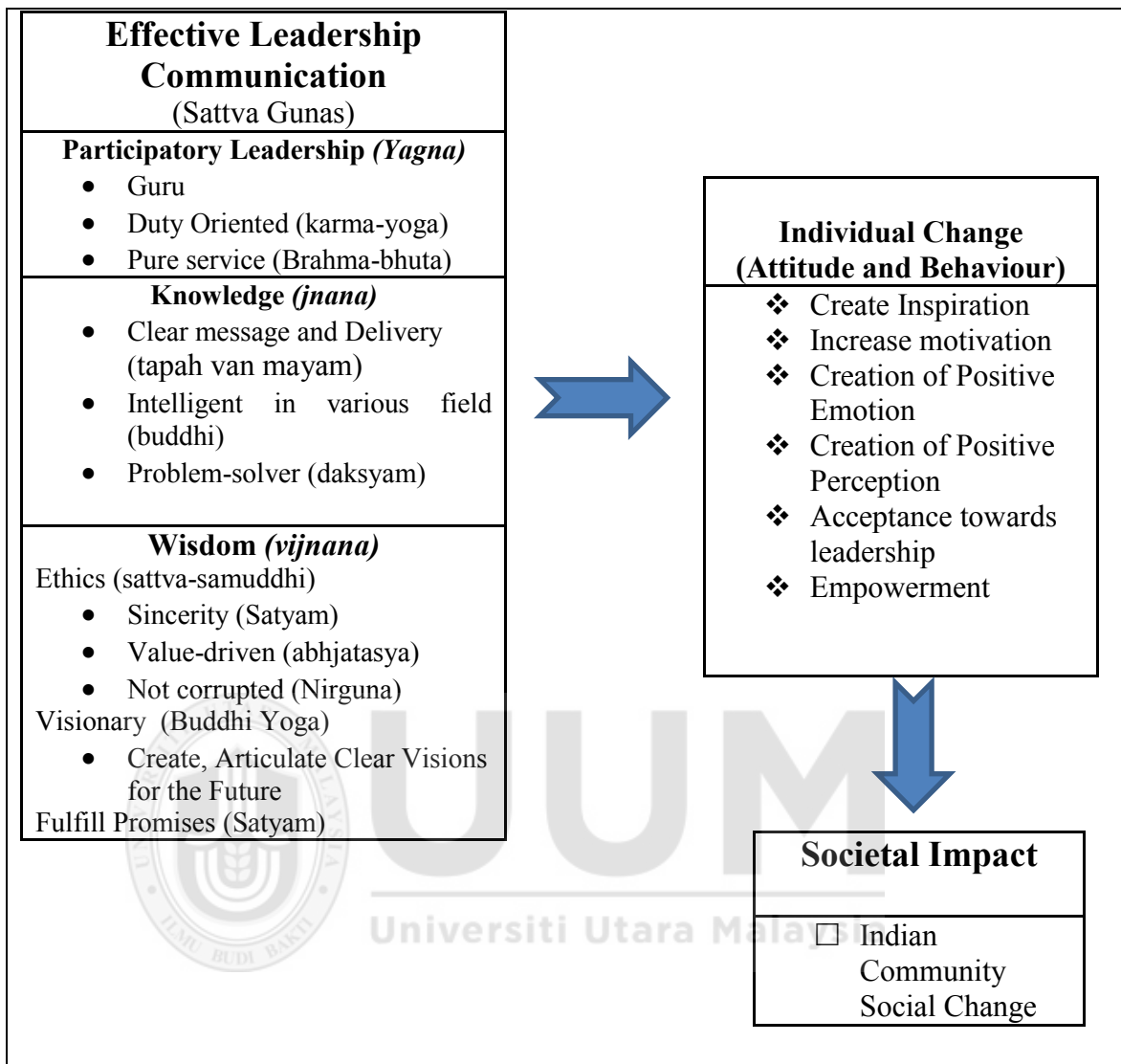
This model was built based on the Karma-yoga concept in Bhagavad-Gita which emphasises on duty-orientation of an individual. The Karma-yoga concept encourages an individual or a leader to work without expecting reward. Based on the findings of the present study, the expected qualities of leadership communication have been categorised based on the level of priority given by the Indians which serves as a reference of expected leadership communication qualities of Indians. Hence, this model can be used to manage and lead the Indian community towards social change. This culturally specific leadership communication model is suitable to be used as a reference by the government in managing the Indian community effectively.

## 5.9 Indians' Model of Leadership Communication for Social Change

The Indians' leadership communication model (Figure 5.8 Indians' Model of Leadership Communication for Social Change) was developed based on the responses obtained from the data collection process, specifically through the in-depth interviews with the informants of the study. The developed model clearly indicates the leadership communication qualities of the Indians as a minority group. This model not only can be used to manage the Indian community in Malaysia but also the Indians who are the minorities in other countries. This model provides some insight into the expected leadership communication characteristics by the Indians in the modern context. Based on the findings of this study, it was found that the expected leadership communication qualities of the Indians were consistent with the "sattva gunas" (goodness) emphasised in Indian culture. Thus, based on the "sattva gunas", this model was developed.

The Indians leadership communication model consists of three main components; participatory leadership (yagna), knowledge (jnana) and wisdom (vijnana). The participatory leadership (yagna) refers to collectivism which requires a leader to think collectively in the interest of people. In this sense, a leader is expected to be a guru who provides guidance for the people towards betterment. Secondly, a leader should be duty-oriented (karma-yoga) who focuses mainly on duty towards the people or community. A leader also should provide pure service to the people without expecting rewards. It is relevant with the discussion in Bhagavad-Gita which stressed on duty-orientation among individuals. Besides that, knowledge (jnana) is another important component of the leadership communication model. The Indians expect for a knowledgeable leader who is able to communicate effectively (tapah van mayam)

with his or her followers with clear message construction and delivery. A leader was expected to be intelligent in various fields, such as politics, social and economic (buddhi). Thus, a leader should be able to play the role of problem-solver, especially in issues pertaining to the people. Lastly is wisdom (vijñana). The Indians want a leader to act wisely in different situations. Regarding that, it was found that ethics (sattva-samuddhi) is one of the prime components highlighted in the study. A leader is expected to be sincere (satyam) in performing his or her duties. He or she should be also value-driven (abhyatasya) throughout his or her services to people. Importantly, a leader is expected to be not corrupted (nirguna). This quality increases the faith and confidence among the followers. Next, a leader should be visionary (buddhi yoga) who creates and articulates clear visions for the future of his or her followers. This encourages the followers to move towards the visions developed. Lastly, a leader must be always fulfilling promises (satyam). Indians expect a leader who keeps his words and promises. Based on the responses of the Indians on expected leadership communication qualities, it strongly indicated that the Indians expect a leader with sattva gunas (goodness qualities), specifically focusing on participatory leadership (yagna), knowledge (jnana) and wisdom (vijñana). It is clearly indicated that the sattva gunas of a leader will be able to influence the attitude and behaviour of his or her followers towards social change or development of the community in different aspects, including social, politics and economy. Therefore, this leadership communication model proves that in order to stimulate social change or development among Indians, a leader should showcase the sattva qualities. It will ensure he or she would receive support from the Indian community and thus, enable him or her to implement policies or ideas that lead the Indian community towards social change.



**Figure 5.8 Indians' Model of Leadership Communication for Social Change**

## **5.9 Recommendation**

This study also would like to recommend extending the study using wider sample to understand further about the responses of the Indians in Malaysia. This could help to formulate more inclusive policies for the Indians and solve issues pertaining to Indians. Particularly, the issue of relocation of estate workers which was identified as an unresolved issue among the Indians in Malaysia. Thus, wider sample could reflect and represent the view points of the Indians in Malaysia. It can be done by engaging qualitative research design.

This study also would like to recommend the leadership communication model that has been develop as a reference to manage the Indians as the minority community. This model could provide some understanding on the Indians' expectation towards leadership. Thus, it would enable leaders to adjust their communication behaviours or actions in order to manage and drive the Indians towards social change.

## **5.10 Contribution of the study**

The distinct contribution of this research to theory and practice is its significant empirical study of leadership communication between majority and minority community from the cultural perspective; and a critical interpretation of the role of Indian culture in facilitating the leadership communication for social change process between majority-minority community in a multicultural context. It encompasses the multi perspective of community representatives ranging from the ordinary people to community leader. It provides a comprehensive feedback on the leadership communication from multi-cultural context, specifically leadership communication involving two communities of difference cultures, specifically enrich and contribute

to a new knowledge of leadership communication for social change from the Indian cultural perspective. The concept of leadership communication concept was explored in a multicultural context which contributes to the understanding of the leadership communication concept from cultural perspective. Besides that, the Indians leadership model is a culture-specific model that was developed which enhances the understanding of people in leadership communication for social change. It provides information about the expectation of a minority community in leadership communication for social change to facilitate the needs of a community and bring social change in a minority community, specifically Indians.

Methodologically, qualitative research design in the present study contributed to improve the understanding of leadership communication between majority-minority community in a multicultural context. In depth interview enabled the informants to share their experience towards leadership communication. This study is an evident of the lived experience of a minority community on leadership communication, specifically the Indians lived experience on leadership communication of Mahathir. It provides the details of the effects of Mahathir's leadership communication on the social change on the community. Besides that, this study also provides valuable reference or model in dealing with minority group such as the Indian community which could be used to improve the leadership communication process between majority-minority community. In order to create social change in the Indian community, the model provides insight into the needs and expectation of the community towards leaders.

Besides that, practically, the Indians' leadership communication model also could serve as a reference for leaders to handle issues pertaining to a minority community

not only in Malaysia but also in other parts of the world. It could be a reference for leaders to understand the expectation of the Indian community to leadership communication and promote social change. Leaders could refer to the Indians' leadership communication model to formulate better policies pertaining to the Indian community.

As this study suggests, culture played a critical role in facilitating the leadership communication for social change between majority-minority community in a multicultural context. Cultural sensitivity of a leader on their followers allows a leader to be transformational by understanding the followers' needs and expectation. As noted in this study, social change in a community occur when the leadership communication of a leader relevant to the culture of a community. The community will be inspired and motivated to change when the leader exhibits his leadership communication skills consistent with culture of a community. Therefore, current and future leaders could be culturally sensitive in communicating with the minority community.

### **5.11 Limitation of study**

An assumption was made that informants' descriptions were honest reflection to their responses to the in-depth interviews as they were described to the researcher. The thick and rich information provided by researcher should provide a perspective to readers how Indians viewed Mahathir's leadership communication in terms of bringing social change from Indian cultural perspective. Since the study focuses the views of Indians in Malaysia in cultural perspective, thus, this study could not be generalised into the other context of discussion. However, it could provide a

remarkable understanding on leadership communication involving leader and followers who are from different cultural backgrounds. Indeed, it will provide an insight on how the Indian culture values influences the way Indians in Malaysia perceive Mahathir's leadership communication. In addition, this study only focuses on the policies that implemented by Mahathir during his premiership which aimed to bring some changes or development in society such as New Economic Plan, New Development Policy, and Islamisation Policy, and not focusing on other policies under Mahathir's premiership.

This study reflected the views of selected Indians, thus, it may not represent the views of Malaysian Indians. However, it provided remarkable understanding of Mahathir's leadership communication for social change from the Indians cultural perspective. Indeed, this study provides insight into how Malaysia Indians perceived Mahathir's leadership communication for social change, rather than to establish a representation of all Indians.

### **5.12 Conclusion**

This study provides evidences developments and setbacks experienced by the Indians under the leadership communication of Tun Mahathir. The results of the study revealed about the Indians' conception on leadership communication, characteristics of Tun Mahathir's leadership communication, the impact of Mahathir's leadership communication towards Indians, the role of Mahathir as a transformational leader, the responses of Indians towards the policies implemented by Mahathir and the expected leadership qualities of Indians. Most importantly, the findings of this study add an important perspective by examining the views from the Malaysian Indians' cultural perspective in social change context. This study provides a significant understanding

of Mahathir's leadership communication, including his leadership communication qualities, approach and policies from minority's perspective. It was clearly indicated that the Indian culture influences Indians' perception towards leaders. Effective leadership communication can only be achieved if a leader is in-line with the culture of the group that the leader communicates with. In this study, it was discovered that Mahathir's leadership communication was consistent with the religious philosophical understanding of the Indians. Thus, it contributes to the acceptance towards Mahathir's leadership communication. However, in the context of social change among Indians, Mahathir's leadership found to contribute at a minimum level as the policies established and implemented did not aim to improve the minorities, especially the estate communities as they were neglected from the rural developments. Therefore, inclusive style of leadership communication is needed in order to bring social change or development of Indians in Malaysia. Furthermore, this study found that Mahathir's leadership communication leads to social change among the Indians at a minimal level. His leadership communication fits into the Indian cultural context and the transformational leadership ideas. The limitation of Mahathir's leadership communication found in this study is due to his policies which did not focus on the poor Indians who were largely located at the estates in Malaysia.

This study provides a new dimension to leadership communication from multi-cultural context, specifically leadership communication of a leader from the majority community and followers from the minority. It was important to investigate leadership communication relationship of the majority and minority because culture of communities in multi-racial countries like Malaysia plays an important role in creating differences between ethnic groups. It was found that Mahathir's leadership

communication leads to social change among the Indians in Malaysia. Specifically, it Mahathir's leadership communication attribute, intercultural communication sensitivity contribute to the effectiveness of his leadership communication. This attribute embraces the difference of his followers including the Indians. This has smoothed the leadership communication process between Mahathir and Malaysian Indians. Interestingly, it was found that Mahathir's leadership communication is culturally-specific. It is consistent with the Indian Vedic philosophy of the Malaysian Hindus. Therefore, the Malaysian Hindus accept Mahathir's leadership communication which leads to social change among the Indians. Interestingly, it was discovered that culture played an important role in the leadership communication process between Mahathir and the Indian community in Malaysia.

Although there are some critics related to Mahathir's leadership communication on the Indian community, especially the marginalisation and estate workers displacement issue. It was found that a large number of estate worker displacement occur during Mahathir's era without a proper study conducted. This situation leads to many social issues among the Malaysian Indians. It was found that Mahathir's leadership communication not contributed significantly to the poor Indians. This is because Mahathir's policies did not address the needs of the poor Indians which was identified as lack of Mahathir's leadership communication. This study is an evidence of the lived experience of the Indian community under the leadership communication of Mahathir. However, future study involves larger sample is needed to further investigate the response of the Malaysian Indians towards Mahathir's leadership communication. This study would like to recommend social need policies

to address the needs of the poor Indians in Malaysia, especially special policy for the Indian community to tackle issues related to them.



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## Appendix A

### Interview Protocol:

#### Exploring Mahathir's leadership communication towards social change among Indians community in Malaysia

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

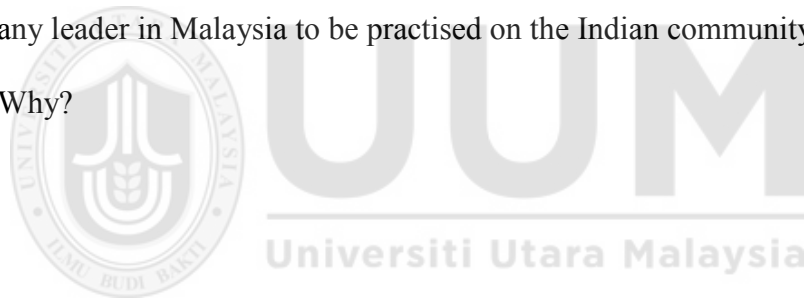
Position of interviewee:

Question:



1. How do you define leadership communication?
2. What do you think should be the characteristics of a good leadership communication?
3. From your understanding, what is the importance of leadership communication? Do you think a leader with a good leadership communication can bring some social change in a society? Probing: Why and how?
4. Based on what you heard on Tun Dr. Mahathir's speech, what do you think about Tun Dr. Mahathir's communication? Is it effective?

5. What is the characteristic of Mahathir leadership that you preferred the most?  
Probing: Why do you think so?
6. Do you think Mahathir's leadership communication has helped Indian community to achieve a better standard of living? If yes, why and in terms of what aspects?
7. What is your response towards the policies implemented by Mahathir?
8. Do you think the Indian cultural values affect the way you perceive Mahathir's leadership communication?
9. How those values are related to Mahathir's leadership communication?
10. Do you think Mahathir's leadership communication can be the best model for any leader in Malaysia to be practised on the Indian community? Probing: Why?



(Thank you for participating in this interview session. All the information provided is private and confidential, to be used only for the research purpose).