

Morality Aspect in the Short Stories of Seno Gumira Ajidarma

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Abstract—This study attempts to reveal morality in the short stories of Seno Gumira Ajidarma. Morality in these short stories can be used as a source of knowledge, feelings and moral actions to become a morally ideal character. Data were collected from the book “*Senja dan Cinta yang Berdarah: Antologi Cerita Pendek di Harian KOMPAS 1978-2013*” (“Twilight and Bloody Love: Anthology of Short Stories in KOMPAS Daily 1978-2013”). This study is conducted by using a descriptive-qualitative approach with indicators of literary didactic that referred to moral aspects. The finding shows that moral aspects in the form of upholding morality and strengthening character, including good manners, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, sincere, and democratic and responsible. The morality aspect contained in the short story “*Duduk di Tepi Sungai*” (“Sit by the River”) is realized in the form of a sense of love, love and affection for fellow creatures, democratic attitude, and knowledge. The morality aspect of the short story “*Kriiingngng!!*” is expressed through a responsible and disciplined attitude towards work. The morality aspect of the short story “*Guru Sufi Lewat ...*” (“Sufi Teacher Passes...”) is manifested in the form of a good manner, independent and creative moralistic character. The morality aspect of the short story “*Dongeng sebelum Tidur*” (“Bedtime Story”) is displayed in the form of a responsible character, hardworking, loving, caring for family, democratic, and creative. While the morality aspects contained in the short story “*Karangan Bunga dari Menteri*” (Bouquets from the Minister) are the character of responsibility, politeness, wisdom, patience, democratic attitude, and sincerity.

Keywords: *didactics, morality, moral aspects, short story*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Industrial Revolution 4.0 offers challenges as well as opportunities for educators and students. Technology advancement is viewed as equal to moral degradation among students. It is a phenomenon today that there is moral degradation among students. For example, there was a case of a high school teacher at SMAN 1 Torjun, Sampang, stabbed to death by his student who could not accept being reprimanded in February 2018. Another case happened to a junior high school’s staff at SMPN 2 Takalar, Sulawesi Selatan, who was mobbed by four students since one of them was hit by school janitor (VOA, 2019).

Morality is closely related to strengthening character. Character is behavior basic value which becomes guidance for the human interaction value system. Once it disappears, all

things are diminished (Nurgiyantoro, 2013). In line with this, Gufron (2010) suggests universal characters based on the following pillars: peace, respect, cooperation, freedom, happiness, honesty, humility, love, responsibility, simplicity, tolerance and unity. To be a characterized person, Lickona (1991) proposes 3 requirements: moral knowing, moral feeling and moral action. To that end, to realize character education, it is obligatory to build and enhance the requirements in an integrative way.

Fiction stories provide the investigation and invention of a characterized person with knowledge, feeling and action displaying the moral value concept (Nurgiyantoro, 2013). Halimah, Sumiyadi, Mulyati (2017), in line with the previous opinion, declare that a model of short stories may be an exemplification of life skill education for people. Such stories are identified as didactical stories. Connecting to such stories, Halimah, Sumiyadi, and Mulyati (2019) reveal that didactical values found in HB. Jasin’s short stories are a model for learning strategies of literacy dimensions. The didactical values within the stories cover good manner character; empathy; critical thinking ability; self-control; the ability to distinguish truth and false; independence; braveness; dignified personality; responsibility; helpfulness; and generosity.

Short stories bridge morality knowledge to be the guidance of being a characterized person. For the critics, the short stories of Seno Gumira Ajidarma are “situational stories” or “newspaper stories”. Such stories’ concerns are mainly on social and realism (Danerek, 2013). On that ground, Ajidarma’s stories are regarded as meeting the demand for short stories with morality expected in society. In other words, like literary works, the stories provide education for recent society in which moral degradation takes place.

A. Morality

Morality is a set of evaluative norms, it functions to determine true or false, wise or not in a group (Adorno, 2001). It includes a number of norms that are consciously reflected by people through reflecting, asking, revising and adjusting to lifestyle. To Shadnam (2015), morality is a well-known thing, coded, or established through a set of the process being invested in one particular context, and hence, it cannot be separated from a context special characteristic. Morality is not gifted naturally without any agent.

Morality can also be seen as ethics, an appraisal of behavior, attitude, and actions related to human prosperity (Lakoff, 2008; Antonio & Sánchez, 2017). In line with this, Nurgiyantoro (2013) specifies that morality is unlimited and able to be categorized into human relationship problems with themselves, the relationship among humans in a social and natural environment, and the relationship between humans and God.

B. *Seno Gumira Ajidarma and His Stories*

Seno Gumira Ajidarma was a prominent and productive writer in Indonesia (Allen, 2002). Besides writing, he worked as a journalist. Apparently, he encountered challenges to write news, many facts could not be converted into news due to The New Order's prohibition. Thereupon, he transformed all the facts into short stories, so that they were all survived and published (Nuryatin, 2001).

Stories composed by Ajidarma are dominantly included in newspaper literature. Newspaper literature or more specifically called as newspaper short story refers to actuality, social theme, realism and long boundary (Danerek, 2013). *Senja dan Cinta yang Berdarah* ("Twilight and Bloody Love") is a book containing all stories written by Ajidarma which have ever been published in *Harian KOMPAS* between 1978-2013. 84 short stories were written in 35 years, chronologically explored a number of themes in various ways. They entertain, as well as have the potential for social history investigation of the time. Some stories of the book are regarded as a story model presenting morality in society.

II. METHOD

The research employed a qualitative approach based on literature didactics theory. The didactical indicators of literature included: 1) educating literature, giving tenets and guidance, and proposing messages; 2) tenets or messages conveyed are moral values, which are a view on truth values, guidance of things appertained to problems in life, such as attitude, behavior, civility or courtesy, and other values respected by society; 3) kinds of moral values can be manifested in problems of social relationship, human and natural environment, and human and God; 4) the realization can be a friendship problem, love, loyalty, betrayal, religious message, social critique, and even propaganda; 5) moral values can be delivered in a direct or indirect way; 6) literature is considered didactical once it provides precise alternative solutions from the problems talked in the work (Halimah, Sumiyadi, & Mulyati, 2019). The indicators of didactics apply to all literary works.

The data were collected from Seno Gumira Ajidarma's short stories compiled in the book *Senja dan Cinta yang Berdarah: Antologi Cerita Pendek di Harian KOMPAS 1978-2013* (Twilight and Bloody Love: Anthology of Short Stories in KOMPAS Daily 1978-2013). The stories analyzed were 1) "*Duduk di Tepi Sungai*" ("Sit by the River") (Kompas, 1988), 2) "*Kriiiiingngng!!!*" (Kompas, 1990), 3) "*Guru Sufi Lewat ...*" ("Sufi Teacher Passes...") (Kompas, 1990), 4) "*Dongeng sebelum Tidur*" ("Bedtime Story") (Kompas, 1994), and 5) "*Karangan Bunga dari Menteri*" ("Bouquets from the Minister") (Kompas, 2011). Those five stories displayed easy to comprehend-didactical values.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. *Morality in the Story "Duduk di Tepi Sungai" ("Sit by the River")*

The story "*Duduk di Tepi Sungai*" ("Sit by the River") depicts a situation in which a grandfather has a conversation with his grandson. Their conversation contains life philosophy experienced by the grandfather in his childhood. Morality aspects detected in this story are love, affection to other living creatures, democratic attitude and knowledge. The following lines prove the values.

Duduk di tepi sungai. Menghayati udara bergetar, memandang burung-burung merpati datang, memandang orang-orang memberinya makan.

[Sitting on the river's edge. Living the shaking air, watching the pigeons come, watching the people feed them].

(Ajidarma, 1988, p. 340).

The lines speak up the attitude of good manner character, realized in love and affection to other living creatures, as a man loving animals.

The following lines exhibit another moral value of the story.

"Tanyakan saja kepada gurumu, Nak, tentunya ia punya jawaban yang bagus."

"Guruku tidak pernah menjawab, Kek, ia hanya mengajarkan bagaimana caranya aku menemukan jawaban."

"Wah, kalau begitu sekolahmu itu pasti sekolah yang bagus. Kamu beruntung sekali, Nak, kamu sangat beruntung..."

["Just ask your teacher, son, of course he has a good answer."]

"My teacher never answered, Grandpa, he only taught me how to find answers."

"Wow, then your school must be a good school. You're so lucky, kid, you're so lucky ..."]

(Ajidarma, 1988, p. 343).

Democratic attitude is sharpened by the lines as the conveyance of either opinion or solution of a problem. The grandfather's character does not provide any answers to his grandson's question; he lets him discover the truth behind the answers. He directs his son to think critically.

The lines indicate a knowledgeable person is presented below.

Dulu ia juga mengenal banyak hal dari kakeknya. Ia mengenal lumpur sawah. Ia mengenal kerbau. Ia mengenal bunga rumput. Ia mengenal seruling. Ia mengenal suara sungai. Itu semua dari kakeknya. Lantas terpancang telapak tangannya sendiri yang keriput. Ia teringat telapak tangan kakeknya. Telapak tangannya sendiri dulu juga seperti telapak tangan cucunya.

[In the past, he also knew many things from his grandfather. He knows the muddy rice fields. He knows buffalo. He knows grass flowers. He knows the flute. He knew the sound

of the river. That's all from his grandfather. Then looked at his own wrinkled palms. He remembered his grandfather's palm. The palm of his own hand used to be like the palm of his granddaughter's.]

(Ajidarma, 1988, p. 341).

The excerpt points out that a grandfather is a knowledgeable person. He constantly senses many things in his surroundings by remembering the tenets generated by his great grandfather. Ajidarma illustrates the remembrance as the story construction. The remembrance is established in a community, particularly family, by telling the story about family history, which involves double negotiation with different potential in characteristics, feelings, or preferences to interact (Akins, 2011; Thorson, Rittenour, Kellas, & Tress, 2013).

B. *Morality in the Story "Kriiingngng!!"*

The story "*Kriiingngng!!*" contains a morality aspect that generally unveils responsibility and discipline to work. The quotation below proves it.

Dering telepon juga terdengar di sudut-sudut lain, tetapi selalu ada yang mengangkat, karena ada orangnya.

"Kriiingngng!"

[The telephone ring can also be heard in other angles, but there is always someone who picks up, because there is someone.

"Kriiingngng!"]

(Ajidarma, 1990, p. 392).

The responsibility implied in the quotation is indicated by answering the phone call as the realization of work responsibility via communication access. Responsibility for work is also traced below.

Namun di lantai-lantai lampu ruangnya padam. Kalau ada yang bekerja lembur, satu lantai menyala semua, itulah bagian-bagian yang terang. Selalu ada yang terang di gedung-gedung bertingkat. Apa sih yang ingin dicapai orang-orang yang kerja lembur?

[But on the floor lights the room went out. If someone works overtime, all the floors are all lit up, and those are the bright parts. There is always light in high rise buildings. What do people who work overtime want to achieve?]

(Ajidarma, 1990, p. 394).

The above lines signify work responsibility by working overtime. The following lines betoken the same values.

Di dalam gedung-gedung itu berjibunlah manusia-manusia pekerja yang ingin hidup sebaik-baiknya, jangan sampai merugikan orang lain, apalagi dirinya sendiri.

[Inside those buildings there are countless workers who want to live as well as possible, not to the detriment of others, especially themselves.]

(Ajidarma, 1990, p. 396).

The lines bespeak work responsibility and discipline. They do something-assumed right and disregard other people's

opinion, and believe that success is dependent on efforts, not other's help (Chen & Ren, 2016).

C. *Morality in the Story "Guru Sufi Lewat..." ("Sufi Teacher Passes...")*

The morality aspect in the story "*Guru Sufi Lewat..."*" ("*Sufi Teacher Passes...*") is depicted in good manner character of Sunan Jagakali who frequently invites people to catch his fish. This is proven in the following quote.

Karena tidak tega memakan ikan-ikan itu, ia mempersilakan penduduk sekitar sungai itu mengambilnya. Karena ikan-ikan yang memasuki keranjang itu berlimpa-limpah seperti produksi pabrik, penduduk dengan senang hati mengambilnya.

[Because he couldn't bear to eat the fish, he invited the people around the river to take them. Because the fish that enter the basket are abundant like factory production, the residents are happy to take them.]

(Ajidarma, 1990, p. 405).

Sunan Jagakali performs sharing attitude with others in order they take advantage of the fish. Additionally, another morality aspect implied is independence, detected in the following lines.

Tersebutlah di desa itu ada seorang pengail di tepi sungai. Ia seorang lelaki yang hanya hidup dari hasil pancingannya. Biasanya, setelah mendapat beberapa ekor ikan, ia pun pulang. Ikan yang beberapa ekor itu dibakarnya, lalu dimakan. Demikianlah kehidupannya dengan setiap hari makan ikan.

[In that village there was a hook on the riverbank. He is a man who only lives from the bait. Usually, after getting a few fish, he went home. The fish that burned a few tails, then eaten. Such is his life with every day eating fish.]

(Ajidarma, 1990, p. 403).

The independence is realized in Sunan Jagakali's choice to go fishing alone to feed himself, without displaying any begging act to other people. Guru Sufi also performs another morality aspect, as implicitly noted below.

Dari Jombang nanti ia akan terbang ke Jepang, setelah meninggalkan si penjaga musala di Pesantren Modern Gontor, supaya bisa belajar bahasa Inggris.

[From Jombang he will fly to Japan, after leaving the musala keeper at Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School, so he can learn English.]

(Ajidarma, 1990, p. 406).

The piece denotes good manners of Guru Sufi supporting the mosque keeper to continue his study namely studying English in Pesantren Gontor. This support is a good attitude to direct the mosque keeper to keep abreast of the times.

Another morality aspect described in the story is the creativity of a boatman. The citation shows the notion.

Suatu ketika dalam perjalanan mereka, tibalah keduanya di sebuah sungai di sebuah wilayah di Jawa Tengah. Di tempat itu tidak ada jembatan. Kalau mau menyeberang, harus

menggunakan getek. Namun tempat penyeberangan di sisi lain sungai itu tidak tepat di seberangnya. Untuk mencapainya, getek itu harus menyusuri tepian sungai beberapa saat.

[One time on their way, they arrived at a river in an area in Central Java. There was no bridge in that place. If you want to cross, you must use a gutter. But the crossing point on the other side of the river is not right across. To reach it, it must go along the river bank for a while].

(Ajidarma, 1990, p. 402).

The creativity exposed is his awareness to derive the benefit of business opportunity around the river as a boatman (of a small boat), facilitating people to cross the river. His preference to work as a boatman to live his living is the embodiment of morality, due to its association with welfare (Antonio & Sánchez, 2017).

D. Morality in the Story "Dongeng Sebelum Tidur" ("Bedtime Story")

The story "*Dongeng Sebelum Tidur*" ("Bedtime Story") talks about a working mother who usually tells bedtime stories to her child. One day, she runs out of bedtime stories; almost 1.825 stories have already been told to her child. Then, the driver has an initiative suggesting her to tell stories based on news found in the newspaper. The story utters the character of responsible, hardworking, loving, and caring for family, democratic and creative.

Those mentioned characters are shown below.

Ibunya, seorang wanita karier yang sibuk, sesibuk-sibuknya tetap berusaha menceritakan sebuah dongeng kepada anaknya sebelum tidur. Jika ia berada di luar kota, atau di luar negeri, ia menelepon tepat pada waktunya untuk bercerita. Kalau ia mesti mengadakan perjalanan panjang, dengan pesawat terbang semalam suntuk misalnya, ia meninggalkan dongengnya dalam rekaman.

[His mother, a busy career woman, kept busy trying to tell a story to her child before going to bed. If he is out of town, or abroad, he calls just in time to tell a story. If he has to go on a long trip, by plane all night for example, he will leave his tale on the record.]

(Ajidarma, 1995, p. 521).

The mother in the story, on the one hand, tries to be responsible for her position as a career woman. On the other hand, she also endeavors to fulfill her duty as a mother to her child by routinely telling the child bedtime stories. Through storytelling, fiction stories conveyed can serve the listeners with moral lessons, get engaged in the plot, view of the world and private ethics (Agerup, 2018). During her bustling schedule of working which prevents her to tell stories directly to her child, she records the stories. This is an actualization of her creativity. Morality is visible in the following citation.

Ibunya hanya tersenyum, memandang ke luar jendela. Ada rembulan di luar sana.

"Kututup gordennya, Sari?"

"Biarkan begitu Mama, aku ingin memandang rembulan itu, seperti mereka.

Ibunya menahan sesuatu yang hampir dikatakannya. Lantas mengecup pipi Sari.

"Selamat tidur, Sari."

"Selamat malam, Mama."

[His mother just smiled, looked out the window. There is a moon out there.

"I closed the curtains, Sari?"

"Let it be so Mama, I want to look at the moon, like them."

His mother held back something she almost said. Then kissed Sari's cheek.

"Good night, Sari."

"Good night, Mama."

(Ajidarma, 1995, p. 520).

It enucleates a mother's love to her child. Another value is evinced below.

Sebelum tiba di rumah, sopir yang jebolan universitas itu berhasil meyakinkan ia punya majikan, agar mengarang saja cerita untuk Sari. Ibu Sari setuju. Masalahnya, ia tidak merasa bisa mengarang. Pandai bercerita tidak harus berarti pandai mengarang bukan?

[Before arriving home, the driver who had graduated from the university succeeded in convincing him to have an employer, to just make up stories for Sari. Sari's mother agreed. The problem is, he doesn't feel he can write it up. Clever storytelling doesn't have to mean clever writing isn't it?]

(Ajidarma, 1995, p. 524).

The lines disclose a democratic value for accepting other's suggestions, skilled, and creative to expand storytelling ideas.

E. Morality in the Story "Karangan Bunga dari Menteri" ("Bouquets from the Minister")

The story begins once a wife's character feels disgusted seeing her husband's behavior. Her husband would rather be proud of a bouquet sent by a minister than his wife's best friends in their child's wedding. Morality aspect in the story is an illustration of a responsible, polite, wise, patient and democratic character. The lines explain the aspect.

"Memang acaranya selalu malam, tapi justru waktu malam itulah sebenarnya gue bisa ngelembur dengan agak kurang gangguan. Negeri kayak gini, kalau menteri-menterinya nggak kerja lembur, kapan bisa mengejar Jepang?"

[“Indeed the event is always night, but it is precisely at night that I actually can melt with a little less distraction. A country like this, if the ministers don't work overtime, when will they be able to catch up with Japan?”]

(Ajidarma, 2011, p. 771).

The citation points out the responsibility to work by doing overtime. Other lines discussing the same morality aspect are as follows.

Perempuan berseragam pegawai negeri itu hanya tersenyum bijak dan menggeleng. Pengalaman melayani lima menteri sejak zaman Orde Baru, membuatnya cukup paham perilaku manusia di sekitar para menteri.

[The woman in the civil service uniform only smiled wisely and shook her head. The experience of serving five ministers since the New Order era, made him quite understand human behavior around the ministers.]

(Ajidarma, 2011, p. 771).

The lines exemplify a good manner by being wise, patient, and understanding of superior anger.

The morality aspect to follow is sincerity. The excerpt below signals the aspect.

“Ternyata ada juga yang tulus. Mengirim karangan bunga karena merasa dekat dan betul-betul tidak bisa datang. Sinta, sahabat Siti semasa SMU, mengirim karangan bunga seperti itu. Dengan terharu, Siti menaruh karangan bunga dari Sinta di dekat pintu, antara lain juga karena tiba paling awal. Di sana memang hanya tertulis: dari Sinta; bukan nama-nama dengan embel-embel jabatan, nama perusahaan atau kementerian dan gelar berderet.”

[“It turns out there are also sincere ones. Send a bouquet of flowers because you feel close and really can't come. Sinta, Siti's best friend during high school, sent a bouquet of flowers like that. Emotionally, Siti placed a bouquet of flowers from Sinta near the door, partly because it arrived the earliest. It is only written there: from Sinta; not names with job titles, company or ministry names and titles in a row”]

(Ajidarma, 2011, p. 775).

It explicates a moral value materialized in sincerity. Siti's high school best acquaintance sends a bouquet for not being able to attend her invitation. Her best friend is expounded on her sincerity. Her bouquet does not reveal any academic degree or position.

IV. CONCLUSION

The above analysis provides a number of morality aspects discovered in the short stories of Seno Gumira Ajidarma, which can be concluded as knowledge, feeling and moral acts for somebody to be a characterized person. The morality aspects identified in the story “*Duduk di Tepi Sungai*” (“Sit by the River”) are materialized in love, affection to other living creatures, democratic attitude, and knowledge. The story “*Kriiingngng!*” generally speaks about responsibility and discipline to work. The actualization of moral aspects of the story “*Guru Sufi Lewat...*” (“Sufi Teacher Passes...”) are good manners, independence, and creativity. While responsibility, hardworking character, affection, care for family, democratic attitude, and creativity are detected in the story “*Dongeng Sebelum Tidur*” (“Bedtime Story”). And the story “*Karangan Bunga dari Menteri*” (“Bouquets from the Minister”) reveals

the character of responsible, polite, wise, patient, democratic and sincere.

The findings are expected to enlighten people to act according to the moral values and norms respected in society. Furthermore, the didactic values in short stories are one of the hopes to raise morale of the current generation.

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