

Educational Values from the Characters of El Shirazy's Novel *Ayat-ayat Cinta: A Sociology of Literature Perspective*

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ANA ROSMIATI

ana.rosmiati@gmail.com

Visual Communication Design Study Program
Department of Design, Faculty of Fine Arts and Design
ISI Surakarta
Surakarta, Indonesia



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ABSTRACT

This article aimed at finding out the educational values reflected by characters in the novel *Ayat-ayat Cinta* written by Habiburrahman El Shirazy from sociological approach to literature. This was a descriptive-qualitative research with textual data in the form of words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and discourse uttered by the characters and narrated by the author in the novel. The result shows that the novel contains some moral messages as well as educational values. Each character in this novel carries educational messages through their characterizations and plot of the story.

Keywords: character, educational value, sociology of literature

INTRODUCTION

The novel *Ayat-ayat Cinta* (Verses of Love) written by Habiburrahman El Shirazy is one of the novels that has received public attention. This novel was one of the best-selling novels in Indonesia. Not only that, this novel was later adapted to the big screen with a completer and more interesting story along with the actors who play the characters. The film was directed by Hanung Bramantyo, and starred Fedy Nuril as the main character. The author's narrations of the story is woven into an integrated storyline including themes, characters, and characterizations, plot, setting, storytelling center, and language style. Some external elements also affect the attractiveness of the novel story into film scenes.

Novel is a form of literary works. It is a series of events composed by an author from his/her life experiences, a reality he/she faced which is supported by a strong power of imagination to make the story seem real. The novel *Ayat-ayat Cinta* by Habiburrahman is a religious novel whose setting takes place in Cairo the capital city of Egypt. This novel is rich of educational, cultural, moral, religious, social, as well as compassionate aspects.

Educational values are things that can be used as role models of life in a society. The author of *Ayat-ayat Cinta* gives a lot of educational elements that have begun to fade in this era. The ability of the author in combining the aspects of education has become an added value to the novel. The main figure in the novel is Fahri. The character was described as a student from Indonesia who is pursuing a Master degree at Al-Azhar University on a scholarship.

The researcher was interested to analyze *Ayat-ayat Cinta* due to the following reasons. First, the novel was categorized into best-selling product. It means that the novel was in high demand by the public. Second, the novel contains stories that educate people from various sides of life problems. Third, the novel tells a religious story in that can be a good role model. Lastly, the novel presents many social issues in society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been found some studies that have similar objects with this current research. The first is from Puspita (2017) with the topic character education values in the novel *Ayah* written by Andrea Hirata.

This study uses a psychological approach to analyze the characters. It was done by understanding the dialogues and narratives of the story from psychology of literature perspective. The similarity between this study and the current research lies in the object of analysis that is characters in the novel. Meanwhile, the difference can be seen in the approach used. The former uses psychological approach whereas the latter applied sociology of literature.

Next, by using Giddens' Structural Perspective, Harpiyanti, et al. (2022) in her research on educational values in the same novel found that there are three dimensions of structural views on the values of education, namely religious values, moral and power values. The first one is completed by being obedient to pray in congregation and at the beginning of time. The second one is characterized by doing good and helping others who need as well as willing to sacrifice for the happiness of others. While the last one is realized by acting to achieve something desired by showing the values of multicultural education. This study is similar to present research in the novel and aspect to be analyzed but different in the perspective. The former applied structural point of view whereas the latter used sociology of literature approach.

Rosmiati (2018) by her research entitled *Educational Value Contained in The Verse of Macapat Mijil Chant (A Sociolinguistics Review)* tried to find the educational, religious, moral, ethic and social values in *macapat mijil*. It was found that although globalization has undermined human civilization, *macapat mijil* chant remained to be an example for the younger generations due to educational values it contains. Both this study and current research to examined the value of education from the perspective of the sociology of literature. However, the former study had the object of *tembang macapat mijil* whereas the latter put the story in a novel as the object of analysis.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

There are some theories relevant to this research. From the approach, this research applies interdisciplinary between sociology and literature as the basis for making the analysis.

According to Durkheim in (Wahyudi 2013, 55), sociology in general can be understood as an objective study of humans and society which includes the social processes that exist within them. This discipline certainly places all social phenomena as study material that must be analyzed scientifically, including the patterns of culture, economy, language, literature, and others. From this process, it will be known how an individual can interact with his/her community and its social mechanisms so that he/she can be accepted in certain behavior.

Dealing with the sociology of literature, Damono (in Saddhono et al. 2017, 18) stated that one approach in literary studies is to understand and evaluate literary works by considering social aspects. According to Wiyatmi (2013, 45), sociology of literature is a study on social problems that exist in a society within a literary work.

One method for criticizing literary works is by using Genetic Structuralism proposed by Goldmann (in Teeuw 2003 and Nurhasanah 2015). The term structuralism was used because he was more interested in the structure of categories that exist in a world of vision and was less interested in its contents. Meanwhile, the term genetics was used because he was very interested in understanding how mental structure was produced historically. In other words, Goldmann focused on the relationship between a world vision and the historical conditions that gave rise to it. Then by the author, analysis of the vision of the world view can be compared with data and social analysis of society.

To support his theory, Goldmann built a set of interrelated categories, thus forming something called genetic structuralism. Goldmann believed that literature is a structure. This structure is not something static, but a product of a historical process that is constantly changing, a process of structuring and destructuring that exists in the society from which the literary work in question originates.

Abidin (2003) claimed that the study of structuralism in literary research is an approach that emphasizes a view that literary work is something that is independent and apart from other elements. In addition, Pradopo (2007) described structuralism as a structure whose elements are closely related one another and each of which only has meaning in relation to other elements and the whole. In Robert Stanton's structuralism study, there are three main elements in the development of literary works, namely themes, story facts, and literary means (Nasution & Sudarti, 2020).

In regard with the elements in a story, Nurgiyantoro (2002) argued that the cohesiveness between various intrinsic elements makes a novel tangible. The intrinsic elements in a novel include theme, plot, figures and characterizations, setting, viewpoint, and language style. Meanwhile, according to Wellek & Warren (1990), the extrinsic elements are things outside a literary work which do not directly affect its building or organic system. Extrinsic studies of literary works link literature with its social context or previous development and trace the reasons for the growth of literature in terms of its origins.

As one element of literary work, characters play significant in the story. Berkowitz (in William Damon (ed), 2002) sees character as a sort of moral anatomy. Berkowitz believed that a person's moral function is influenced by his/her psychological characteristics. Character as a moral anatomy is a psychological component that makes a person fully moral. The moral anatomy includes seven sections, i.e.: moral behavior, moral values, moral personality, moral emotions, moral considerations or thoughts, moral identity, and basic characteristics.

In relation with education, Guntur (2010) defined character education as a type of education manifested in a system of teaching character values for students. This includes components of knowledge, awareness or will, and actions to carry out these values, both for God the Almighty, oneself, fellow human beings, the environment, and nationality which are embodied in thoughts, attitudes, feelings, words, and actions based on religious norms, laws, manners, culture, and customs.

The theory used for solving the problems in this study was Goldman's genetic structuralism. Besides, it also involved a sociological approach to literature and character education theory. The urgency of this research was to educate the public about the importance of educational values that can be adopted in everyday life. There is a sense of concern related to the fading value of education today. Character education is something that has been done for a long time but it is still a novelty nowadays to show the importance of character education aspects in everyday life. Through the the novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, the author entrusted the message of the importance of character education which is depicted through the attitudes and behaviors of the characters in the novel.

RESEARCH METHOD

The type of this research was qualitative descriptive. Yusuf (2014) argued that qualitative research is an inquiry strategy that emphasizes the search for meaning, understanding, concepts, characteristics, symptoms, symbols, and descriptions of a phenomenon. It is focused and involves multiple methods, has natural and holistic characteristics, prioritizes quality, uses several ways as well as presented in a narrative form.

This research used structural approach for analyzing the content of the research object. The primary data source of this research was the novel entitled *Ayat-ayat Cinta* written by Habiburrahman El Shirazy. Meanwhile, the secondary data sources were reference books, previous research results, and internet connection. This literature was important to use as material to complete research. The data themselves were in the forms of words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and discourse spoken by the characters as well as narrations told by the writer of the novel. The observation method was carried out by identifying the texts in of the novel to find out the relevant data.

DISCUSSION The discussion of the results of this research on the novel *Ayat-ayat Cinta* can be divided into two. The first is the analysis of the story from a sociological approach to literature and the second is the educational values that build the story. The analysis of the story was carried out by finding out the characterization of characters from the narrations and the dialogues in the novel along with looking at the social conflicts related to the society. The conflicts that occur between the characters through the story were described in relation with the social conditions of the community.

Characterization of the Characters

A literary work is certainly present through the imagination of stories that become social problems in society. A novel story is not entirely just the imagination of an author but also based on the author's sensitivity to capture the social problems around him/her. The sensitivity and cleverness of the author in uncovering the social problems around him/her make the story in the novel seem real in life. This can be seen in the novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, especially from the relation between the events and the description of each character. Several figures other than the main character were also involved in social problems in society. Social conflicts are presented with a strong imagination, so the stories are interesting to read.

The main characters of the story is Fahri, whereas the supporting figures are Nurul, Maria, Aisha, Noura, Saeful, Rudi, Hamdi, Nahed (Maria's mother), Tuan Boutros (Maria's father), Shaykh Usman (Fahri's Professor), Shaykh Ahmad (Fahri's lecturer at Al-Azhar), Ustadz Jalah (Nurul's uncle) and his wife, Egbal and his wife (uncle and aunt of Aisha), Amru (a lawyer), Magdi (a police officer), Noura's brother, Bahadur (Noura's stepfather), and Maria's younger siblings. Meanwhile, the setting takes place in Cairo Al Azhar, flats, mosques, restaurants, metro (public transportation), prisons, hospitals, the City of Alexandria, apartments, and campuses. The theme of the novel is a struggle to uphold justice. The justice is covered by the guilty character Fahri. Fahri's love life with Aisha is described as full of ethics and decency. The love theme is not between humans only, but also human's love for their God which is raised in a big way.

The storyline of the novel following a forward plot. It can be seen from the introduction of Fahri's character with Maria, Noura, Aisha, and others. Then, it moves on to the conflict between Fahri and Noura. In the end, it comes to the climax where Fahri was put in a detention cell on charges of rape. Then, the separation, when Fahri married Maria while she was sick. Maria was the key to freeing Fahri from the legal bondage of the alleged rape case against Noura. This plot ended when Fahri married the two girls and was released from prison. However, unfortunately, Maria could not be saved at the end of her life.

The social problems in the story can be seen from each character in the novel. The characters are depicted in storylines that experience interactions in the community environment, such as campuses, courts, and prisons, for instance Fahri as the main character. Fahri is described as involved in social issues in relationships

with the neighbours, friends, courts, and prison. Fahri's character experienced various life problems starting from the neighbor problems. Fahri was indirectly dragged into conflict with neighbors when he intended to help Noura, another character in the novel. Socially, Fahri's intention to help people undergoing difficult circumstances is a noble thing. However, Noura's selfishness rewarded his kindness by accusing Fahri of being mean to her. Noura loved Fahri so much that she was willing to give false testimony in order to get Fahri. If observed, the conflict experienced by this main character is a form of social problem involving norms and ethics.

The characters in the story can be analyzed from the sociological aspects of the literature, that is existing social phenomena based on the text in the novel. The followings are the characterizations of the characters.

Fahri The main figure in this novel is Fahri. Fahri is described as a young man with a strong will and determination to study abroad with a scholarship. In addition, he was active in translating Islamic books to help finance his studies in Cairo. Fahri was a young man who was innocent and did not know to date. He was only close to his mother and sister. In Cairo, he lived with his friends in a flat. There was one good neighbour, Maria's family. Fahri's friend in Cairo was Nurul, who came from East Java. Fahri and Nurul only communicated normally. Likewise, his relationship with Maria's family was only limited as neighbours by helping each other.

Sociologically, Fahri also had an attitude of togetherness with his friends living in flats. Fahri always paid attention to his friends' needs in the flat. Fahri was one of the earliest residents compared to his friends. They all came from Indonesia. This can be seen in the following quotation:

As the person entrusted with being the head of the family, even without a housewife, I have to pay close attention to the needs and welfare of the members. In this flat, there were five people: I, Saiful, Rudi, Hamdi, and Mishbah. I happen to be the oldest and the longest one staying in Egypt. Academically, I am also the highest. I am just waiting for the announcement to write a Master's thesis at Al Azhar. The others are still in the Bachelor's degree program. (page 19)

From the quote above, it is described that Fahri socially had a close relationship with his friends in the flat. Fahri had empathy for his friends. A good relationship with his friends in the flat was a form of upbringing in his family to always be sensitive to other people. A sense of mutual need and help was awakened from Fahri's character in his family, so it became a habit wherever he was.

Socially, Fahri also had good behavior with his neighbours in the flat he lived in. There was Maria's family. They respected each other with Fahri and his friends. It can be seen from the quote below:

The Egyptian girl named Maria. She also liked to be called Maryam. The two names he thinks were the same. She was the eldest daughter of Mr. Boutros Rafael Girgis, coming from the Girgis family. A very devout Koptok Christian family. That said, Maria's family was our closest neighbors. Yes, most familiar. Their flat or house was right above ours. The beauty was very polite and respectful to us Indonesian students studying at Al Azhar. (22-23)

From the sociology of literature, Fahri's character is described as having a harmonious social relationship with Maria's family. This was usually done by Fahri when he lived in his village. In the village, good relations were established with the surrounding neighbours. Fahri came from a low-income family which care for

education and etiquette. This has formed his character to have good manners with other people.

Syaikh Ahmad Taqiyyudin Abdul Majid Shaykh Ahmad Taqiyyuddin Abdul Majid was Fahri's teacher in learning the Qur'an. He was depicted as the character of a smart and humble teacher and blended in society. It is shown in the following quote:

Even though he is still a young man, his depth of religious knowledge and his fluency in reading and interpreting the Qur'an have made people call him *Shaykh*. His humility and high commitment to defending his truth have made him loved and respected by all walks of life in Hadayek Helwan and its surroundings. Interestingly, he is close to young people. The nickname *Shaykh* does not make him feel awkward playing football every Friday morning with young people. (31)

Socially, Shaykh Ahmad was known in the community as a humble teacher. Of course, he often interacted with his community. The quote above showed that he was well-known in his community.

Maria The character of Maria is described as a good Coptic girl in the neighborhood. She was a devout girl and had good social relations with her neighbours. Fahri and his friends were also her good neighbours. Even with Noura's family, she had a good relationship, despite the bad character of Noura's father. It is evident in the quote below:

From behind the window, I saw Maria walking towards Noura. She walked in a blue robe. Her black hair flowed in the evening breeze. Maria then sat beside Noura. She seemed to be talking to Noura while stroking her head. Noura was still holding the pole. Maria kept trying. Finally, Noura hugged Maria with sobs. Maria treated Noura as if she were her sister. While hugging Noura, Maria looked at me. I nodded my head. (76-77)

From the perspective of sociological approach to literature, as can be seen from the quote, Maria had good social relations with her neighbours. This can be exemplified by Maria's desire to help Noura from her stepfather's cruelty. Maria's position in helping Noura was risky because Noura's father forbade other people from interfering in his family's affairs. This Maria's kindness, that was supported by Fahri, indicated that she had good social relations with her neighbours.

Nurul One of the supporting characters in the novel is Nurul. Nurul is described as a polite girl, good at hiding her feelings. Nurul, in the sociological dimension, came from a respected family. It can be seen in the following quote:

You know Nurul was the only daughter of Mr. KH. Ja'far Abdur Razaq, a caretaker of a large Islamic boarding school in East Java. Apart from being beautiful, she is also smart and kind. Since she was still in the first grade of Aliyah, many big Kiai had proposed to Nurul for their son. Nurul did not want to. When Nurul finally studied at Al Azhar, the proposals increased. Kyai Jafar, Nurul's father, repeatedly called Nurul so that she would immediately choose her life partner. He felt very uncomfortable rejecting the proposal continuously. Especially if the proposal came from a more senior Kiai or his teacher. (227-228)

The quote above describes Nurul as coming from a respected family. Nurul was the daughter of a respected scholar. Nurul's character was described as someone who did not easily fall in love with a man. Her heart was only for Fahri. Meanwhile,

Fahri did not know that Nurul loved him. Fahri regretted it but could not do anything because he was about to propose to Aisha. Socially, Fahri came from a poor family, while Nurul came from a respected family. This made Fahri not dare to open up to Nurul about his feelings.

Noura Noura's character was described as a girl who was introvert, cruel, emotional, but smart. Socially, Noura came from a family that was not harmonious. Noura lived with her father, mother, and siblings. Noura's father had an unkind, rude, and sharp personality. The following quote shows that.

"Your Honor, Ladies and Gentlemen. Forever the truth will prevail. If not in the court of the world, then later in the court of the hereafter. Forever human tricks mean nothing compared to God's power. Ladies and gentlemen, if there is any poor girl in this world who is unfortunate. It is me. From childhood until a few months ago, I was adopted by someone who was not my biological parent. When I was a baby, I was switched to another baby in the hospital. I lived in a family of vicious morals, but I was always steadfast and kept on surviving. Until finally, that night. I want to say what happened. That night, before I was kicked out and dragged by the evil Bahadur to the street, he raped me first... sob... sob!" Noura sobbed for a moment. The courtroom was shrouded in silence wrapped in sorrow and pity. (386-387)

From the quote above, it can be implied that the social relations between Noura's family with their neighbors were not good. Even with Noura herself, who is the member of the family, his father did not treat her well. Noura, who experienced physical and mental suffering, made her an introvert person to other people. Noura also had feelings for Fahri. Fahri also received an influence from Noura's family life.

The characterization of each characters in the novel can be analyzed from the sociological approach to literature. Among others, this can be identified from the symptoms that appear from their social backgrounds. Social background is only to see the unity and not an element of diversity. The background is the worldview of the social group created by the author himself. Besides, in the sociology of literature, we study social aspects by analyzing texts to understand the social phenomena told in the literary works. A novel is a form of either literary works or a product of society.

Educational Values from the Characters

The educational values that can be emulated from *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* can be seen in each character. The main character, Fahri, is described as a disciplined person in carrying out his duties and responsibilities similar to Shaykh. This is shown in the following quote:

My schedule for reciting the Qur'an to Shaykh, known to be very disciplined, is twice a week. It is every Sunday and Wednesday. He always comes on time. He was never once absent. He did not care about the weather or season. As long as he is not sick and there is no urgent matter, he will surely come. It's not good if I'm absent just because of the heat. Because he does not just accept students for *talaqqi qiraah sab'ah*. He tests anyone who wants to learn *qiraah sab'ah* with him first. What is tested is the memorization of thirty Juz of the Qur'an with free qiraah. It can be Imam Warasy, Imam Hafsh, or others. (17)

Fahri had a high discipline attitude when he was committed to learning the Qur'an from his teacher. Extreme weather was not a hindrance. The figure of Shaykh Ahmad Taqiyyuddin Abdul Majid was Fahri's teacher in learning the Qur'an. He

was depicted as a character of a smart and humble teacher who blended into society.

Similar to Fahri, Aisha is described as a figure who had a good character as well. She had high social awareness to people around. It can be seen when she was on public transportation, she was giving her seat to an older person. It is shown in the following quote.

“Mom, wait! Please, sit down here!” The woman in the pure white veil got up from her seat. The grandmother was led by her two children to move to her seat. (41)

The educational value that can be drawn from the quote above is that when in a public place, one must have a sense of concern for those around him/her. Prioritizing older people and persons with disabilities to enjoy sitting facilities on public transportation is obligatory for young people. Sensitivity to the surrounding environment is an educational value that the community can imitate.

The novel also gives educational values in the form of helping to find solutions to every arising problem. Concern for helping neighbours who are in trouble is a good role model to emulate. This is evident in the quote below:

I explained the results of my conversation with Nurul to Mr. Boutrous and Maria. They smiled in relief. They took me upstairs to their flat to explain everything to Noura. In the living room of the Boustros house, Noura looked down with a sad face. (85)

Based on the quote above, a good relationship with fellow neighbours is a good educational value in society. This can be seen from the interaction among the families of Maria, Fahri, and Noura. Even though they would possibly face another problem, they maintained prioritizing to solve the problems that were happening.

This novel also contains ethical educational values in describing the relationship between husband and wife in a polite language which was not vulgar with bad sentences. It is proven in the following quote:

We then played the most beautiful melody of love in the history of human love, hoping for the reward of *jihad fi sabilillah*, and hoping for the birth of a chosen generation who glorify and exalt the name of Allah Azza wa Jalla wherever they are in the future. (266)

The quote above describes Fahri's relationship with Aisha, who is in full of harmony in his household life.

The Fahri family also educated their children to be grateful for God's gifts. This was done when they had meals together with the family. The following quote shows it.

Before eating, mother reminded us not to forget to read *basmalah* together. If Mbah Ehsan happened to be around, Mother would ask him to pray, and we children would agree. Then, we opened the meal rollicking. After the food was finished, we would open the banana leaf made as a placemat for eating. Then, we scrambled to take the change happily. Everyone got one. Because if not, one got more money and some did not get it, then it is an obligation for those who received more to share it among those who did not get it. (115)

The quote above illustrates the value of good education to be instilled in the family, so they are always grateful for God's grace. Eating together in the family is a good habit for a family. Eating and praying together with the family is a tradition that must be maintained in the family. According to Guntur (2010), character education is realized in a system of instilling character values into students which includes components of knowledge, awareness or will, and actions to carry out

these values, both to God Almighty, oneself, fellow human beings, the environment, and nationality which is embodied in thoughts, attitudes, feelings, words, and actions based on religious norms, laws, manners, culture, and customs. Based on the theory above, it is known that Fahri's family still adhered to customs in their everyday life i.e.: having meals together with a prayer to get blessings in the beginning.

Thus, the novel *Ayat-ayat Cinta* provides a lot of educational values regarding behavior, ethics, morals, discipline, and many other positive things. The ingenuity of the author of this novel is also discussed in every story, both about the existence of places in Cairo and the sentences of the novel, which are so romantic. This novel has become a favourite novel to the readers.

CONCLUSION The novel *Ayat-ayat Cinta* that was written by Habiburrahman El Shirazy is full of life values. Various educational, social, cultural, and religious aspects can be found in the narrations of the story as well as speeches from the characters. The characterization of each figure is described in different manners according to the social conflicts that was occurring.

In this research, the analysis of the character was based on social problems in the society. As the main character in the novel, Fahri is described as a person who had big and complex problems. Meanwhile, the additional characters—Aisya, Maria, Noura as Fahri's friends—played a role in connecting the storylines of this novel into an interesting story as whole. The storylines can become the point of readers' interest in the novel. It makes easy for readers to understand the story. On the other hand, the novel's language, that is full of wise and romantic sentences, makes the reader feel that the story is real and not only a fiction.

The characters can be analyzed through a sociological approach to literature from the social phenomena that happened and the conflicts experienced by the characters. The novel also contains educational values that can be picked up by society at large. Many aspects of education are entrusted in a lot of conversations in the novel. These are implied in the characterization of each figure. The values reflected from the characters can also be put as the examples of character education to be well adopted by society. However, this research still leaves a connecting line of problems, e.g.: the characters has not been analyzed from a literary psychology approach yet and the values explored in the research are limited to that of education which can potentially be expanded to other values, such as ethical, moral, cultural, and social values.

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