

Conference Paper

Literature Literacy as a Medium of Peace and Harmony between Two Countries

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Abstract

Literary tradition in Malaysia middle/high school from the very beginning to the era of Literary Component in Malay language (Komsas) plays a big role in shaping the intellectuality of student's mindset. It is carried out by introducing novels around the Archipelago that corresponds to time and issues, without leaving the main theme of universal humanity. These themes have not changed. That is the purpose of literature subjects being introduced in school. Since the 70s, students in Malaysia have been exposed to Indonesian 'heavy' novels such as *Di bawah Lindungan Kaabah* by HAMKA, *Salah Asuhan* by Abdul Moeis, followed by *Atheis* by Achdiat Karta Mihardja and *Keluarga Gerilya* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer and poems by Amir Hamzah and Chairil Anwar. All the novels, poems and short stories reveal the valuable aspect and their impact in forming the student's mind. Just take an example of the novel *Atheist* that features the soul of a traditionalist Islamist to face all modern ideologies that arose post Second World War. Or take another example of a patriotic struggle by characters like Saaman from Amila's family in *Keluarga Gerilya*. These are the serious issues that we could learn by reading Indonesia literary works by a few great writers. Therefore, Indonesian literature has played an important role in Malaysia as a medium of peace and harmony.

Keywords: peace, harmony, universal humanity

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1. Introduction

Literature plays an important role interpreting culture in Malaysia and Indonesia. Both countries and nations share many intrinsic similarities due to geographical location. Through literature valuable lessons can be gained, moral lesson can be learned along with high aesthetic values.

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1.1. Objective

1. This paper aims to discuss literary literacy in Malaysia. This would answer how literature relates balance sustainability to human beings not only to tend to technical but psychological matters are also important to produce a balanced human being as envisioned by the philosophy of national education (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia).
2. To discuss that Indonesia literary works have given its contributions to Malaysian education.

1.2. Limitation

The discussions of this paper are limited to a selected works produced by some great authors from Indonesia, meaning this study only select few Indonesian novels that ever used or studied at school level in Malaysia. This paper also does not apply the complicated literary theory in discussing the selected novels. But I have to admit that I cannot avoid "close reading approach" (Generally anyone who studies literary knows this) in discussing the novels.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Education system

Malaysian education system at one time was separated into two main streams, namely art stream and science stream. Students entering the art stream will have the opportunity to analyze the novels from Indonesia and local writers as well.

Malaysia Literary Philosophy as drafted in 2002 which reads as follows:

Malay Literature Education in Malaysia aims to generate minds and emotions, identity, nurture a nation's culture and cultivate a competitive attitude towards building intellectuals.

(Pendidikan Kesusasteraan Melayu di Malaysia bertujuan untuk menjana minda dan emosi, mengukuhkan jati diri, menyuburkan budaya bangsa dan memupuk sikap berdaya saing ke arah pembinaan insan bestari (Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran Kesusasteraan) (Melayu SPM, 2002: hlm. ii)

The inclusion of literary subjects introduces to the middle and high school students with emotion, positive attitude and building dynamic intellectuals.

2.2. Literary works and great writers

To fulfill the requirement from the ministry of education aspiration promptly, the literature committee for Malaysian school to include some great novels from Indonesia. Among the great writers from Indonesia who are introduced to high school students in Malaysia are Hamka, Abdoel Moeis, Achdiat Karta Mihardja and Pramoeद्या Ananta Toer.

- Hamka is known through his famous works *sas Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck* and *Di Bawah Lindungan Kaabah*.
- Abdoel Moeis through his work *Salah Asuhan*
- Achdiat Karta Mihardja through his work *Atheis*
- Pramoeद्या Anantatoer through his works such as *Keluarga Gerilya* dan *Bumi Manusia*.

These works are read by most art stream pre-university students in Malaysia. As we understood reading literary works is not a kind of reading to fill our free time. These works are analyzed and study either in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Students have gained a lot of valuable messages from the great work of these Indonesia writers.

3. Discussion

3.1. Values and messages

Without applying any literary theory, it is hard to digest the moral values and messages at the school level. But somehow students are considered as novice readers able to learn the values and messages presented by writers. From Hamka's works such as *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck* many lessons we could learn, among them well suited to the souls of young people such as the philosophy of love.

The love is expressed through this story is so meaningful, sweet, and exciting. It depicts not an ordinary love; it was not just a love between two souls. It is love born out of the realization that love is from of God that needs to be guarded, nurtured and sown in every soul. This concept of God's gift will not be the same as the false love or the lusty love.

"Allah yang menjadikan mata dan memberinya penglihatan. Maka Allah pulalah yang menjadikan hati dan memberinya cinta.....Cinta adalah iradat

Tuhan, dikirimnya ke dunia supaya tumbuh.” (Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck)

The attributes of al-Rahman and al-Rahim almighty Allah Most Gracious, Most Merciful are nurtured to shape real meaning of love; but man's hands is the one who has fouled and defiled it.

The message learned not be fooled by some peoples who are drifting in the temptation of the evil and place a mistake on love! Love is innocent at all! In Islam it is clear stated in holy Quran verses al-zinaa (do not come to adultery). It is forbidden even the act that close to adultery (*zina*). If you are in love and committing adultery (before officially married), then mistakes are on your shoulders that fail to hold the power of love to subdue the passion of turbulence. These are the concept of love that Hamka conveyed.

Through *Di bawah Lindungan Kaabah*, it is also learned that the novel is full of religious and customary values, once again Hamka confronted some customs are conservative and unfair to human. Hamka depicted the case of ban on high school for girls, and the arranged marriage, determines by family, whereas female characters can only obey. All these messages are high values passed through literature. These two stories related to romance and traditional customs that unfair to human beings share the similarities in life that practiced in Malaysia, the stories particularly impressed especially among Malay readers.

From *Salah Asuhan* we learnt that the novel conveys intrinsic message that at that moment of time Eastern could not be Western. Western education does turn a Minangkabau boy to be Westerner. A local character Hanafi with Western (Dutch) education married Corrie du Busse a Westerners and the marriage was not an ideal marriage because Eastern and Western will not meet similarities. They fall in love with each other but Corrie's father who did not approve his daughter to marry with an indigenous man. Their relationship ends with tragedy. The moral of the story educates that marriage without family's consent will not end happily. This message educates young peoples to respect and consider family's approval before marriage. This story is related to life in Malaysia as well, where sometimes ago when Malay boys who had acquired English education believe that they were also English and no longer belongs to Malay society, but in reality they are still considered unequal to English.

Atheist of Achadiat motivates higher level of thinking. The faith of Islamic background highlights how young man focuses to convert his atheist friend to Islam; it is a story about friends who chose to become an Atheist, influenced by Marxism.

This *Atheis* novel is very well used as a material to convey the message to the students about the complicity and atheist beliefs have violated the constitution of the country stated in god we trust. The first pillar of Malaysia's constitution is the belief in the god and the official religion of the nation is Islam, although other religions are free to practice and be recognized. Communism and atheist are not recognized.

Pramoedya's novels depict a different issue. Pramoedya depicted struggle for independence and the opposition to Dutch colonizers. *Keluarga Gerilya* has captures peoples are struggle for independence. The illustration of life's agonies experienced by the colonized is the issue that Pramoedya highlighted. The *Keluarga Gerilya* is full of life lessons. The description of the nation's struggle, nationalism, the lives of the people and the principles are held firmly in a very difficult condition. These are the messages that can be drawn from the story of Pramoedya's novel. The younger generation has never experienced living under colonialization. This story motivates readers appreciate life as an independent nation.

The studies made on these novels are simples. This is due to the paper is only intended to share some information that literary literacy and works from Indonesian authors have also played an important role in Malaysian education system.

The messages that have been obtained from Indonesian authors through great novels have contributed so much lessons to young Malaysian generations. They are very impressed by the literary works from Indonesia. This proves that literature has played an important role in creating a peace and harmonious life between two nations and countries.

Territorial boundary of political power is not seen through cultural relations between Indonesia and Malaysia especially in literature and culture. Literature is not limited to a written works only. Lessons and massages from literary works play a role to unify us in a harmonious life. This will bring us back to remember a history before the interference of Western power, colonialism has drawn up a map of the country's boundaries. All are aware that Indonesia and Malaysia shared similarity in languages and cultures. The narrow nationalism will bring enmity and disturbance to this Malay Archipelago.

3.2. Suggestion

Literature works/products need to be preserved by both countries. Need not to drag it into a debate regarding political boundaries of the country. A huge loss awaits us all if it is not maintained properly. History of literature and culture in both countries are also important as it is our roots. If these two governments recognize these, it will expand

the opportunities for new scholars to carry on doing a research and contributing new ideas in the field of literature in this region.

Besides science and technology, the ministry of education must not ignore literary subjects in the national education system. This is because:

Through Malay literary subjects, students need to have the skills to peer and review various aspects of literature as well as writing literary works. In fact, students are able to master higher language skills because they understand the elements of the mind and the connotative connotations of the mind. (Md Ishak A Rahman Utusan Malaysia 24.3.2013)

It is agreeable that science alone without art literacy will not reach a balance in life. Students studying literature should not be considered as those who do not succeed in pursuing science stream.

Institutions of higher education should take the initiative to open a space for regional literary works. For example, higher education institutions in ASEAN countries should encourage researchers, post graduate students to study literary works such as novels, short stories or poems written by authors from Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and others.

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, it has been proven through literary works produced by great authors/writers have contribute peaceful and harmonious to both countries that we live in. It is undeniable that the media from both countries sometimes sensationalize the differences when there are misconceptions in some issues or cases. But we still work uses wisdom in solving the problem and maintain the healthy atmosphere.

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