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The Social Values in Agus Vrisaba's Short Story Postman in the Moving History of the Country: Selected KOMPAS Short Stories 1981–1990

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to analyze the social values in Agus Vrisaba's short story the postman, included in the anthology in the moving of the country: Selected KOMPAS Short Stories 1981–1990, and to examine its connection to the social reality of Indonesian society in the 1980s. This study employs a qualitative approach using descriptive analysis. The data source is the text of the short story the postman in the anthology in the moving of the country: Selected KOMPAS Short Stories 1981–1990. Data were collected through literature review and observation-recording techniques, then analyzed using content analysis with reference to Zubaedi's theory of social values. The results of the study indicate that this short story predominantly represents the values of compassion (family bonds and care), responsibility (discipline and empathy), and harmony in life (cooperation and justice). The research findings reveal that these values are a sociological reflection of Indonesian society in the 1980s, when the postal service served as a vital communication infrastructure amid low national literacy rates. Furthermore, this study uncovers the moral degradation of the protagonist due to the influence of a social pathology namely, the legal form of gambling known as "Porkas" at that time which ultimately led to a breach of professional trust. Overall, this short story documents the transition of the society's sociocultural values from a personal, analog era toward demands for integrity amidst the economic pressures of the New Order era.

KEYWORDS: Social Values, Short Story, Social Reality, 1980s, The Postman.

INTRODUCTION

Literary works do not emerge in a vacuum. They are the product of an author's creativity, shaped by their experiences, social environment, and the cultural conditions of the society in which they live. Through their works, authors depict various aspects of human life, including social relationships, life values, and the dynamics of society at a particular time. Therefore, literary works serve not only as a form of entertainment but also as a medium for reflecting on social life. (Risdi., 2019) states that literary works are a form of creative activity that possesses aesthetic value while also depicting human life with all its complexities.

In line with this view, (Wellek and Warren, 1949) argue that literature is a creative activity that produces works of art capable of reflecting human experience. Thus, literary works can be understood as a reflection of social life that embodies the various values present in society. One of the values frequently reflected in literary works is social values. Social values serve as guidelines that society uses to determine what is considered good, important, and beneficial in communal life. These social values are reflected in both individual behavior and social relationships among members of society. In literary works, social values can be seen through the actions of characters, the conflicts that arise in the story, and the social relationships depicted by the author.

According to (Zubaedi., 2012) social values can be classified into three main indicators: love, responsibility, and life harmony. The indicators of love include devotion, mutual aid, a sense of family, loyalty, and compassion. Indicators of responsibility include a sense of ownership, discipline, and empathy. Meanwhile, the indicators of life harmony include justice, tolerance, cooperation, and democracy. These three indicators serve as the foundation for identifying and analyzing the social values reflected in literary works. These social values can be found in various works of Indonesian literature, including the short stories featured in the anthology in the moving of the country: Selected KOMPAS Short Stories 1981–1990. This anthology contains selected short stories published in the daily newspaper Kompas during the 1980s, many of which depict the dynamics of Indonesian society during that period.

One of the short stories in the anthology is "Pak Pos" by Agus Vrisaba. This story tells the story of a mailman named Sadiman who delivers mail to the community every day. Sadiman is portrayed as a mailman who is nosy about the contents of the

letters he is supposed to deliver, so he is untrustworthy in his work because he peeks at the contents of customers' letters before sending them to the recipients. Through this character, the author highlights various social values related to interpersonal relationships in society. The short story "Pak Pos" cannot be separated from the social context of Indonesian society in the 1980s. During that period, Indonesia was under the New Order regime, a time marked by development across various sectors of life, including infrastructure and communication services. However, the development of communication technology at that time was not as rapid as it is today. The most common form of communication used by the public is mail sent through the postal service. Letters serve not only as a means of conveying information but also as a way to maintain social ties among families, friends, and professional contacts separated by distance. In this context, the profession of a mail carrier plays a vital role as a facilitator of communication in society. The presence of the character Sadiman in the short story "Pak Pos" embodies this social role while also reflecting social values such as responsibility, compassion, and dedication in performing work that serves the interests of others. Previous studies have shown that short stories published in the Kompas daily newspaper often serve as a medium for reflecting social and moral values in society. (Qomariyah et al., 2022), for example, found that the social values in the 2019 Kompas Selected Short Stories included tolerance, dedication, mutual aid, kinship, compassion, a sense of belonging, discipline, empathy, justice, cooperation, and democracy. These findings indicate that Kompas short stories not only present fictional narratives but also represent the social values that are alive within society.

Another study conducted by (Faozi et al., 2020) shows that the moral values in the short story anthology "Kasur Tanah" (Selected Short Stories from Kompas 2017) encompass three main aspects: moral values regarding the relationship between humans and God, moral values regarding the relationship between humans and themselves, and moral values regarding the relationship between humans and their social environment. Moral values related to the relationship between humans and their social environment are reflected, among other things, through attitudes of mutual assistance, maintaining good relations with others, and building harmonious relationships within society. Although various studies have examined social and moral values in Kompas short stories, research that specifically analyzes the social values in Agus Vrisaba's short story "Pak Pos" and relates them to the social reality of Indonesian society in the 1980s remains limited. Therefore, this study is important to provide an understanding of how literary works represent social values and how these values relate to the social conditions of society during a specific period.

Based on the above discussion, this study aims to analyze the social values present in Agus Vrisaba's short story "Pak Pos" using Zubaedi's indicators of social values and to relate them to the social reality of Indonesian society in the 1980s.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using descriptive methods. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to deeply understand and describe the social values present in Agus Vrisaba's short story "Pak Pos" through an analysis of the text's content. A qualitative approach is a research approach that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from the objects being studied (Moleong., 2017). The descriptive method is used to systematically describe the social values that emerge in the short story and relate them to the social reality of society during a specific period.

The data source for this study is the short story "Pak Pos" by Agus Vrisaba, which appears in the anthology in the moving of the country: Selected KOMPAS Short Stories 1981–1990. The research data consists of text excerpts from the short story that contain social values. The social values analyzed in this study refer to the indicators of social values according to Zubaedi, which include the values of compassion, responsibility, and harmony in life (Zubaedi, 2012).

The data collection methods used in this study include a literature review and the read-and-note technique. The literature review involved examining various sources related to literary theory, social values, and previous research relevant to this study. Meanwhile, the close reading technique was carried out by reading the short stories carefully and repeatedly to identify text passages containing social values, and then noting down quotations relevant to the research focus (Sugiyono, 2019).

The data analysis method used in this study is content analysis. Content analysis is a research method used to systematically and objectively analyze the meaning contained within a text (Krippendorff, 2018). Data analysis in this study was conducted in several stages, namely: (1) reading the short stories thoroughly to understand the plot; (2) identifying passages that contain social values; (3) classifying the data based on indicators of social values according to Zubaedi; (4) describing and interpreting the social values found in the short stories; and (5) relating these social values to the social reality of Indonesian society in the 1980s.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Synopsis of the Short Story "Pak Pos" by Agus Vrisaba

This short story explores the moral decline and inner conflict of a civil servant named Sadiman, who has worked for over a decade as a mail carrier. Behind his dedication lies a pathological compulsion that violates professional ethics: opening and reading other people's letters before delivering them to their recipients.

The conflict came to a head when Sadiman came across a thick handwritten letter addressed to Mrs. Karyo, a widow in the neighboring village. Driven by curiosity and financial pressure due to his child's school fees, Sadiman tampered with the letter. He found fifty thousand rupiah in cash inside a significant sum for the sender, Parmin, who worked as a meatball vendor in Jakarta to pay for his sick younger sibling's medical treatment.

Sadiman took all the money, using the postal regulations prohibiting the mailing of cash in ordinary envelopes as a moral justification for his actions. However, this act triggered a series of human tragedies. Poor Mrs. Karyo kept visiting the post office full of hope, waiting for money that never arrived, until she was forced to go into debt to pay for her child's medical treatment.

Sadiman's psychological strain reached its lowest point when he delivered the next reply. Through that letter, he learned that Parmin had to work extraordinarily hard to scrape together the remaining funds. To make matters worse, Mrs. Karyo returned to the post office with tragic news: her son had died due to a delay in medical treatment. The crushing weight of existential guilt left Sadiman unable to bear the emotional burden any longer. The story ends both tragically and reflectively when Sadiman decides to resign from his job and forfeit his pension rights a silent act of atonement for his shattered integrity.

B. Social Values in the Short Story "Pak Pos"

Based on the analysis of the short story "Pak Pos," not all of Zubaedi's sub-indicators of social values were found in the text. Therefore, the discussion focuses on the most prominent sub-indicators of social values that appear in the short story, namely certain aspects of compassion, responsibility, and harmony in life.

1. The Value of Love

According to Zubaedi (2006:13), the value of compassion is a social value related to emotional bonds between individuals, reflected in attitudes of devotion, mutual aid, kinship, loyalty, and concern for others. The value of compassion in the short story "Pak Pos" can be seen through various forms of social relationships that develop among the characters.

a. Family spirit

The value of family is evident in the short story through the relationship between Parmin and his mother, Mrs. Karyo. Although Parmin moved to Jakarta and lives in modest circumstances, he still tries to help his mother back in the village. This is evident in the following excerpt.

"I'm just a meatball vendor. I spent months saving up so I could go home and marry Sayem. Now I have to start all over again. Here, I'm sending you another ten thousand rupiah that's all the money I have left."

This quote shows that Parmin continued to try to fulfill his mother's request even though he had to work hard to raise the money. This attitude reflects the strong family values in the relationship between children and parents. In the context of Indonesian society, family ties often serve as the primary foundation for building social solidarity, especially in families separated by distance due to migration.

b. Compassion

Her compassion is also evident in the way Mrs. Karyo pays close attention to the well-being of her family, who are currently facing difficulties. This was evident when Mrs. Karyo explained her son's situation to the postal worker.

"My child has been sick for weeks now, sir. It's getting worse. I've had to borrow money from my neighbors to pay for the medical bills. I really need the money Parmin sent, sir."

The quote illustrates a mother's concern for her sick child. Mrs. Karyo is trying to find ways to ensure her child receives medical treatment. This attitude demonstrates that concern is a tangible expression of the value of love within family relationships.

2. The Value of Responsibility

According to Zubaedi (2006), the value of responsibility relates to an individual's awareness of the need to fulfill their duties and uphold the trust placed in them. This value encompasses a sense of ownership, discipline, and empathy toward others.

a. Discipline

Sadiman's sense of discipline is evident in his work as a mail carrier, delivering letters to the public every day. This is evident in the following excerpt.

"Sadiman has been working as a mail carrier at that branch post office for over a decade. Everyone calls him Mr. Postman."

The quote indicates that Sadiman has long been working as a mail carrier. This profession demands discipline and responsibility because it involves delivering information that is important to the public. However, that sense of discipline was compromised when Sadiman was tempted to take the money inside Parmin's letter.

"Ah, if you're going to take it, you might as well take it all. No one will be able to trace where the money went."

The quote indicates that Sadiman has violated his professional responsibilities as a mail carrier. This action illustrates the moral conflict the character faces when his personal interests conflict with the values of responsibility he is supposed to uphold.

b. Empathy

The theme of empathy emerges toward the end of the story when Sadiman begins to realize the impact of his actions on Bu Karyo's life and her family.

"Sadiman noticed that Mrs. Karyo's eyes were swollen. Her face was pale and filled with sorrow. And what he saw brought back the agonizing voices from the depths of his soul."

The quote suggests that Sadiman began to feel the suffering experienced by Mrs. Karyo. The guilt he felt indicated his empathy for the plight of others who had been harmed by his actions. That empathy ultimately made it impossible for Sadiman to bear his guilt any longer.

"Guilt gnawed at him for weeks until finally Sadiman couldn't take it anymore and went to his boss to ask to quit."

This moral awareness demonstrates that the value of responsibility ultimately continues to play a vital role in shaping individuals' attitudes in social life.

3. Life Harmony

According to Zubaedi (2006), the value of social harmony relates to efforts to maintain harmony in society. This value encompasses justice, tolerance, cooperation, and democracy.

a. Cooperation

The value of cooperation is evident in the social relationships within the village community, where people help one another in their daily lives. This is evident when Mrs. Karyo asks her neighbor for help reading a letter she received from Parmin.

"I can't read it myself, but a neighbor of mine read it to me."

This quote illustrates the spirit of mutual support among community members. Mrs. Karyo's neighbors were willing to help her read the letter because she was unable to read. This attitude reflects the enduring value of cooperation in rural communities.

b. Justice

The concept of justice in this short story is actually revealed through the wrongdoing committed by the character Sadiman. Sadiman's act of taking the money Parmin had sent caused injustice to Mrs. Karyo, who desperately needed that money.

"According to my neighbor, Parmin sent some money. But there wasn't any money at all in the envelope I received from the mailman."

The quote indicates that Mrs. Karyo suffered a loss as a result of Sadiman's actions. This incident illustrates how a violation of the principle of justice can cause suffering for others in social life.

C. The Connection Between the Social Values in the Short Story "Pak Pos" and the Social Reality of Society in the 1980s

Agus Vrisaba's short story "Pak Pos" is a literary artifact that captures the sociological dynamics of Indonesia in the 1980s, a time when the postal service played a vital role as the lifeline of communication and the economy for marginalized communities. The love and compassion embodied in the familial bond between Parmin and Bu Karyo reflect the massive migration phenomenon of the New Order era. According to Setyawati (2022), in the 1980s, rural communities were highly dependent on postal services due to the limited availability of formal banking infrastructure in remote areas. This explains why Parmin chose to insert cash into an envelope, a risky practice that, according to historical records from PT Pos Indonesia (2020), was often carried out by lower-income individuals due to a lack of procedural knowledge or an attempt to avoid the administrative fees associated with postal money orders, which were perceived as complicated.

The erosion of Sadiman's sense of responsibility is also closely linked to the social reality of the government's legalization of gambling at that time. The author specifically mentions that Sadiman was "obsessed with Porkas," which, according to (Haryanto., 2015), stands for Pekan Olahraga Ketangkasan, an official prize draw that was widespread in the mid-1980s before it was eventually shut down due to public protests. The presence of Porkas in this narrative is not merely a backdrop, but a determining factor that erodes the integrity of public servants like Sadiman, to the point where he dares to manipulate postal regulations for personal gain. This aligns with the theory (Zubaedi., 2006) stating that the value of responsibility is closely tied to the awareness of upholding one's trust; when this value collapses due to economic pressures and social pathologies such as gambling, the individual's moral framework within that profession is likewise destroyed.

Furthermore, the sense of community depicted through the neighbors' help in reading Mrs. Karyo's letter reflects the state of national literacy at that time. Data from the Ministry of Education and Culture (2015) shows that the illiteracy rate in Indonesia in 1980 was still quite high, reaching 28.8%. This situation fosters strong social dependence in rural areas, yet simultaneously creates an opening for individuals like Sadiman to commit ethical violations due to the lack of direct oversight from illiterate recipients. In the modern era, the role of the "postman" riding a traditional bicycle and the physical Weselpos system has been replaced by digital efficiencies such as mobile banking and app-based logistics couriers, which technically minimize the scope for internal conflict and personal betrayal of trust such as what Sadiman experienced leading him to resign and forfeit his pension rights.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of Agus Vrisaba's short story "Pak Pos", it can be concluded that this work is not merely a fictional narrative, but rather a profound sociological reflection on the reality of Indonesian society in the 1980s. This study successfully identified three dominant social values: compassion, responsibility, and harmony in life. The value of compassion is reflected in the strong family bonds and mutual care between urban dwellers (migrants) and their families in the village. However, these positive values clash with the erosion of professional responsibility caused by the social pathology of Porkas gambling, which was rampant at the time.

This study also reveals a close connection between the intrinsic elements of the story and historical facts. The use of physical letters, the reliance on a letter carrier riding a traditional bicycle, and the practice of enclosing cash in envelopes provide a vivid illustration of the limitations of the banking infrastructure and low literacy rates, which necessitated the emergence of a sense of community harmony through neighborly cooperation.

Theoretically, this short story supports the view (Zubaedi, 2006) that the values of responsibility and trustworthiness are the primary foundations of individual integrity within the social structure. The inner conflict experienced by the character Sadiman, leading up to his decision to resign, signifies that moral sanctions and empathy remain the highest authority in the social order, even though the bureaucratic system of that era had significant loopholes for violations. Ultimately, the short story "Pak Pos" serves as a literary documentation of the transition in Indonesian society's communication from the personal and morally risky analog era toward a more transparent and efficient digital era.

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