

MORAL VALUES IN MAYA ANGELOU SELECTED POEMS

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Abstract

The objectives of the study were 1) to describe the form of moral values found in selected poems by Maya Angelou, and 2) to describe how the disclosure of moral values in selected poems by Maya Angelou. In this case, the research used a descriptive qualitative method to classify and analyze the data. This collection of poems is interesting to research because it contains many moral values and very inspiring messages about life, humanity and justice in the poem. The approach used in this research is a pragmatic approach. Based on the results of the analysis, the researcher found three most dominant moral values : Moral Courage, Be Yourself, and Honesty. After finding the moral values in each stanza of the poem, the poem was analyzed to obtain the meaning contained in each stanza.

Keywords: Moral Value; Pragmatics; Maya Angelou's Poems

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a work that is born from the author's imagination and expressed with all its beauty. Literature is a work of art created by an author to be enjoyed, understood, and utilized by the society. Literary works bring great benefits to our lives (Irmaniati, 2016: 29). One of the most famous literary works is poems. Poem is considered a profound and captivating form of artistic expression, allowing poets to convey complex emotions, thoughts, and experiences in a concise and moving way (Görlich, 2016: 522).

Poem is considered the earliest form of literary work created by humans (Wisang, 2014: 12-13). Poem is a type of literary work that expresses a poet's thoughts and feelings in an imaginative way and is produced from the concentration of language's entire force by focusing on both its physical and internal structures (Waluyo, 1991: 25). Poem is a literary work distinguished by unique characteristics and elements different from other forms of literature, such as its form and internal expression.

According to some experts, poems has various physical structural elements that affect the meaning and impression conveyed. For example, Pratt & Pinsky (1999:161) consider that line placement, rhythm, and sound in poetry play an important role in conveying emotional intensity and deep meaning. Meanwhile, It is important to study word arrangement, rhythm, and cohesion in the structure of poetry to understand its artistic quality. Thus, it can be concluded that poem is a form of literary expression that uses language to evoke emotions, convey thoughts, and create aesthetic experiences. Every poem must relate to its poet because poem is created by expressing the poet's self. The historical statement behind the creation of a poem is very important in giving meaning to the poem. Poem captures a particular era and will reflect that era as well. Interpretations of poem that refer to historical realities will be more concrete and closer to the poet's true intentions.

Poem as a literary work can be examined from various aspects, one of which is the moral aspect. Moral is the value of good and bad human behavior. Moral is an aspect of personality that a person needs in order to realize a harmonious, fair, and balanced social life. Moral behavior is

needed to achieve a peaceful life full of order and harmony (Asmaran in Rubini, 2018: 232-233). Moral values should be present in literary works including poems. This is because literature is basically persuasive, which can influence readers as role models and allow them to follow the actions and behaviors reflected in literary works. This is very helpful in giving the right direction to the readers.

When studying literary works is to examine and reflect on them. The purpose of analyzing literary works including poem and others is to gain a deeper understanding of the literary work in question and help explain it to readers who do not understand the work. When researchers bring up moral values in their work, the data and information presented comes from the experiences of others and their own experiences. In addition, to find moral messages and special meanings contained in a poem, an in-depth analysis is necessary. With the analysis conducted by literary critics and readers, the values contained in the poem can be implemented in everyday life.

One of the literary works that contain moral values is a collection of poems by Maya Angelou. The moral values in Maya Angelou's poetry collection are written in stanzas about the discrimination experienced by black people in America and their struggle for freedom and equality in their community. The researcher used Maya Angelou's poem collection as the object of research. Maya Angelou is an African American poet, screenwriter, orator and actress who was born on April 4, 1928 in St. Louis, Missouri and died on May 28, 2014 in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. She was the first African-American woman to be asked to recite her poem at the 1993 United States presidential inauguration.

In this research, the researchers tend to analyze moral values in selected poems by Maya Angelou using a pragmatic approach. The pragmatic approach is to understand a literary work that is created to influence its readers in the form of a desired response. To understand the meaning of literary works, experts propose an approach called the pragmatic approach. Siswanto (2008:191) state that "The pragmatic approach is an approach to literary studies that focuses on the role of readers in receiving, understanding, and appreciating literary works". With the emergence of the pragmatic approach, the field of literary fiction began to focus on the role of the reader as a subject that continues to change depending on the presence of the reader. because in this approach, the reader has the right to respond and benefit from the literary work.

Based on the aforementioned description, researchers are very interested in analyzing the Moral Value of Maya Angelou Selected Poems because her poem tells about Maya Angelou's life struggle as a black woman who is able to survive, work hard, and still prioritize love for family. In these poems, there are many messages contained about life, humanity, and justice. By analyzing the moral values in the selected poems, the researcher hopes to deepen readers' understanding and appreciation of poem and contribute new ideas about this complex art form. This research has broad implications for literary or linguistic academics seeking a deeper understanding of how the physical structure of poem is analyzed.

METHOD

In conducting research, a research method is always required. Research methods are needed so that data collection is more accessible to researchers. To support this research, researchers used descriptive research methods with a qualitative approach. Descriptive is a problem formulation that guides research to explore or portray the social situation to be studied thoroughly, broadly and in depth. Qualitative research method is one type of method to describe, explore and understand the meaning that a number of individuals or groups of people consider to be derived from social or humanitarian problems. The qualitative research process involves important efforts, such as asking questions and procedures, collecting specific data from participants,

analyzing inductively ranging from specific themes to general themes, and interpreting the meaning of the data. The final report for this study has a flexible structure or framework. Anyone involved in this form of research must apply an inductive research perspective, focus on individual meaning, and translate (Clark & Creswell, 2015:4-5) The qualitative description research method is data collection according to the actual facts without any engineering that focuses more on the results and their meaning. The author chose this method because the focus of this research is on describing the moral values of the object to be observed. According to Arikunto (2013: 131) Data sources are places, people, or objects that researchers can observe asking, or reading something related to the variables under study. The data of this research are selected poems by Maya Angelou, where the analysis focuses on the moral values within these poems, supported by a pragmatic approach.

In this study, the researcher's role as the main instrument of data collection The researcher collects, compiles and analyzes the data individually. According to Hsieh & Shannon (2005:1283), qualitative research has several characteristics, including humans as instruments and data cards or note-taking only as supporting instruments in data collection. Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and compiling data obtained from interviews, field notes, and documentation by organizing data in categories, describing it into units, synthesizing, arranging it into patterns, choosing which is essential and which is learned, and making conclusions so that it is easily understood by oneself and others.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The researcher will present the findings and discussion obtained after analyzing the poems based on the research problem to find moral messages from several titles of poems by Maya Angelou using a moral approach and supported by a pragmatic approach. From the results of the research analysis below, the researcher found 3 moral values contained in the poems by Maya Angelou, namely: Moral courage, Being yourself and Honesty.

Discussion

From the analysis of this research, the researcher found several moral values contained in several selected poems by Maya Angelou with the title *Still I Rise*, *Call Letters: Mrs. V.B*, *Phenomenal Woman*, *Equality*, *Woman Work*, namely: Honesty, Moral Courage, Being Ourselves, Humility, Critically. Some of the moral values contained in some of the selected poems are illustrated from several fragments of sentences contained in several stanzas of the selected poems.

1) Moral Values in the poems "*Still I Rise*"

In this poem, the researcher found a moral "Moral Courage" in some of the stanzas. Moral courage is loyalty to conscience, the courage to maintain an attitude that is believed to be an obligation without violating moral values even though it has to risk conflict (Suseno 2007: 142-149). In the poem titled "*Still I Rise*" with the theme of self-esteem and self-confidence, Maya as a black woman shows the strength and courage of black women who are able to survive and thrive in the face of discrimination and oppression from white people. In the poem, although Maya has experienced many difficulties and obstacles in her life, she still gets up and never gives up. This poem is very inspiring and motivates readers not to give up in the face of any difficulties and always strive to achieve the desired goals.

2) Moral Values in the poems "*Phenomenal Woman*"

In this poem, the researcher found a moral "Being Ourselves" in some of the stanzas. Being Ourselves means not being easily influenced by trends that can have a negative impact

on yourself, showing yourself as you are, having a strong and mature character, confidence without being affected by world trends and the times. It implies that we have a stand (Suseno 2007: 142-149). In the poem titled "Phenomenal Woman" the poem rejects conventions and stereotypes. Women do not need to be submissive or beautiful in order to be seen as charming and admired. The poem tells women to be who they are and not be influenced by the pressures of their surroundings and the times.

3) Moral Values in the poems "*Woman Work*"

In this poem, the researcher found a moral "Honesty" in some of the stanzas. Honesty is what is expressed in accordance with the facts or in accordance with reality. An honest or fair attitude will foster other people's trust in us. honest attitude is an attitude that does not oppose his conscience or his beliefs (Suseno 2007: 142-149). In the poem titled "Woman Work" it tells of the struggles of a black woman who is overwhelmed by the tasks she has to perform throughout the day, from cooking, cleaning, picking cotton and cutting sugar cane. The poem implies that black women have long been expected to devote their time and energy to others for centuries without receiving any recognition or reward. The poem also references the history of slavery, which further emphasized the labor and freedom of black women. Eventually the woman finds solace through nature, which gives her a sense of freedom and peace.

Analysis of Moral Values in poems

1. Disclosure of Moral Values in poems "*Still I Rise*"

In this poem, the moral value of "Moral courage" is found, which is explained in the first, third and sixth stanzas. the following explanation on each stanza:

*You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.
(Line 1-4, Stanza 1)*

In the first stanza, Maya says that no one can oppress or bring her down. She doesn't care what is written in history books because she knows they are full of "distorted lies". She does not mind if others step on her to the ground. She said that if she was trampled to the ground.

4) Disclosure of Moral Values in poems "*Equality*"

In this poem, the moral value of "Moral Courage, Humility and Critical Attitude" is explained in the first, second, third and seventh stanzas. The following is an explanation of each stanza:

*You declare you see me dimly
through a glass which will not shine,
though I stand before you boldly,
trim in rank and marking time.
(Line 1-4, Stanza 1)*

In the first stanza, Maya describes the oppression she experienced. The line "You declare you see me dimly, through a glass which will not shine," is as if Maya is speaking to her oppressors. "You declare that you see me dimly through a glass that will not shine," as if describing those (black women) who are seen but not really fully seen.

*You do own to hear me faintly
as a whisper out of range,
while my drums beat out the message
and the rhythms never change.
(Line 5-8, Stanza 2)*

The second stanza describes them as almost invisible and even unheard of for their existence. Maya also states that there is a continuous cycle of oppression or inequality between

racism and genders. Referring to the line "while my drums beat out the message and the rhythms never change." as a sign that she is 'beating out the message' of equality for everyone. This shows that he is against racism and wants everyone to be treated equally and he will continue to spread the message until the issue is resolved.

Equality, and I will be free.

Equality, and I will be free.

(Line 9-10, Stanza 3)

The third stanza uses repetition to make the point clearer. In the sentence there is a meaning that is quite simple to decipher, Maya firmly voices freedom for black women by ending the inequality and discrimination they experience.

You announce my ways are wanton,

that I fly from man to man,

but if I'm just a shadow to you,

could you ever understand?

(Line 11-14, Stanza 4)

In the fourth stanza, the speaker is accused of being immoral or indecent and is told that their life is just to hook up with one man and then another as often as they deem necessary, or to be called a prostitute. However, the speaker does not deny the accusation, but instead rephrases the question, "if I'm just a shadow to you, could you ever understand?" This line refers to African Americans as shadows to white people. This conveys the racist message that black people are treated with less value compared to white people which suggests that they are at the bottom in the social hierarchy. However, they follow up this observation by pointing out that given the distance between the two, the oppressor cannot possibly understand their own accusations.

In this stanza, the researcher also found the moral 'Humility'. Where it is explained in the speaker's act of humbly accepting the accusations thrown at him by the oppressors. The researcher also found the moral value of "Critical" which is described by the critical thinking of the speaker responding to the accusations directed at him from the oppressors.

Take the blinders from your vision,

take the padding from your ears,

and confess you've heard me crying,

and admit you've seen my tears.

(Line 21-24, Stanza 7)

In the sixth stanza, Maya wants everyone to be aware of the problem of inequality. Maya wants everyone to be able to recognize the problem, act on it, and do something about it. In the last line of her poem, Maya also says that she will not stop fighting for equality until equality is achieved, because "the drum never stops beating".

CONCLUSION

After analyzing several collections of poems by Maya Angelou, the researcher draws conclusions from some of the data which is a description of moral values with a pragmatic approach. The following conclusions have been summarized by the researcher:

1. After analyzing the poem by Maya Angelou. Of the seven moral values proposed by Suseno. Researchers found moral values that the author wanted to convey, namely the moral value of "Moral Courage" in the poems entitled "Still I Rise", "Call Letters: Mrs. V.B." and "Equality". The moral value of "Honesty" in the poem entitled "Woman Work". The moral value of "Being Yourself" in the poem entitled "Phenomenal Woman". The value of "Humility and Critical" in the poem entitled "Equality".

2. Among the seven moral values found in several collections of poems by Maya Angelou, such as the value of moral courage, honesty, being yourself, humility, independence, responsibility and critically. Among them, the value of moral courage most often appears in poems by Maya Angelou.

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