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## Pragmatic Criticism of *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air* Novel by Ahmad Tohari

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### Abstract

This research aimed to recognize the benefits of pragmatic criticism on the novel *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air* (LTLA) written by Ahmad Tohari. The method used in this research is descriptive. The results of this research are as follows: (1) LTLA novel tells about Amid, Kiram, Jun, Jalal, and Kang Suyud as Hezbollah forces whose essential struggle is lillahi taala (because of Allah), (2) LTLA novel is interpreted as a novel about the conflict of inner-soul in keeping their faith as Muslim, and their hate to Republican Army as many of them did not pray, and (3) as an evaluation of LTLA, the background of this story based on the life of Indonesian people since the days of the Darul Islam ruled by Kartosuwiryo. The conclusions of the LTLA novel are educative, namely: (1) inviting to keep loyal to the Indonesian state and its people; (2) carrying out the commands of religion (Islam) correctly and adequately; and (3) love each other's soul and inner fellow people.

Keywords: Pragmatic criticism, novel, *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air*, criticism, Hezbollah.

### Introduction

Ahmad Tohari has a straightforward attitude. Its simplicity can be seen in the manner to dress, talk, and drive. He is indeed simple in appearance but not in thinking and pondering (Harbunangin, 2018: 12). He is a person who casts an Islamic cultural spirit. He is a figure who obeys his religion (Islam) (Widodo, 2018: 8). As a serious writer, he is always serious about working on the object. Novel *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air* is one of his works. At least in Central Java, he is the successor to Pramudya Ananta Toer, Rama Mangun, and Umar Kayam (Sadono, 2018: 4). The writer, who has an Islamic boarding background, adapts himself to urban society's association because he has ever worked in Jakarta

for a long time. At the same time, he makes travel from traditional culture to modern culture and vice versa.

The LTLA novel is chosen as the object in this study because there are several reasons. First, the author is always humble in appearance, but he is opposite in thinking and pondering. Therefore, the contents of the literary works are always of high quality. Second, the contents of literary works in the LTLA novel convey the story of the Indonesian struggle, especially in the era of Dutch and Japanese colonization, DI / TII, and the Indonesian Communist Party, which undermined the power of the NKRI. Third, Muslims' strength is physically and spiritually in forming unity when facing various kinds of life problems. Based on the problems above, it emerges the pragmatic research, namely the study of literature oriented to literature's usefulness to the readers (Endraswara, 2003: 115).

Literature is divided into three parts, namely: (1) Literary Theory, (2) Literary History, and (3) Literary Criticism (Pradopo, 2002: 3). The emergence of various writings that inappropriately address the latest literary criticisms makes the readers confused. The terms of structuralism, deconstructionism, hermeneutics, literary receptions, and semiotics are discussed rather haphazardly. As a result, literary criticism, which should function as a bridge of communication between authors - through texts - and readers, becomes a dark jungle and misleading wilderness (Mahayana, 2015: 142).

According to the theory of literary approaches, literary criticism is divided into four parts, namely: (1) mimetic criticism, (2) pragmatic criticism, (3) expressive criticism, and (4) objective criticism (Abrams in Yudiono, 2009: 42-43). In this study, pragmatic criticism was chosen because the critics viewed literary works' meaning as greeters of literary works (Yudiono, 2009: 42). Suroso and friends (2009: 24-26) revealed that pragmatic criticism was oriented to the benefits of literary works to the lives of readers, for example, (1) the benefits of education, (2) the benefits of inner or social sensitivity, (3) the benefits of adding insight, and (4) the benefits of psychological or personality development of the readers. Literary works are superior if they are beneficial to society because of providing fun, entertainment, and education. According to

the philosopher Horace, literature must be "fun and worthy," which in the original language was known as *dulce et utile* (Pradopo, 1994: 2-3).

Educating means to maintain and give teachings about characters, manners, and thinking intelligence. The benefits of education in literary criticism are to provide various information about the process of changing attitudes and behavior of a person or group of people to be mature people through teaching and training. Sensitive means easy to feel, easily touched, easy to move, not negligent, and sharply accepts or continues to influence outside. The benefits of inner or social sensitivity in literary criticism always sharpen the mind so that it is easily touched by internal or social. Insight means to view. The benefits of adding insight into literary criticism mean to give additional information, knowledge, life experiences, and views about life. The benefits of psychiatric development or personality from a literary criticism are being able to smooth a reader (Suroso et al., 2009: 25-26).

### **Research Methodology**

This research belongs to qualitative research using descriptive methods. Descriptive research is research intended to collect information about a phenomenon, namely the state of the phenomenon, according to the conducted research (Arikunto, 2005: 234). This research produced descriptive data in the form of written words about people and observable behavior. This descriptive method was done by using appreciation of the inter-concept interactions that were being studied empirically. The things that would be studied in this study cover three aspects, among others were: (1) describe the content, and the purpose of the novel, (2) interpret the characters involved in the novel, and (3) evaluate the novel content in relation with the moral value of the story. The research technique used was a literature study technique. The researcher used materials that are relevant to research from several libraries and private collections. That was why the research process used the qualitative descriptive method precisely in the form of pragmatic criticism of the *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air* novel by Ahmad Tohari.

### **Findings and Discussion**

**Description Stage**

Amid, Kiram, Jun, Jalal, and Kang Suyud were originally Hezbollah forces whose basic struggle was *lillahi taala* (because of Allah). They fought the Dutch army. When Japan and the Netherlands surrendered, Hezbollah forces were going to be appointed as the Republican army. However, because of the treason carried out by the communist party, things went awry. The inauguration of Hezbollah did not happen; instead, it emerged as a struggle between Hezbollah forces and the Republican army and traitors (PKI people). Amid and his friends managed to save themselves and returned to the village. Unfortunately, the Republican army pursued them. It made hostility between them.

Since then, they fled to the Cigodang teak forest, carried out robberies, murders, and against the Republican army. Moreover, they proclaimed as the Darul Islam warriors under the leadership of Kang Suyud. Kang Suyud did not like Republicans from the beginning because many of them did not pray. He wanted to establish a new country called the Islamic State of Indonesia, and it against the Republican army politically. He did not recognize Bung Karno and Bung Hatta, but more respectful to his leader, Kartosuwiryo. They were opposed to the Republican army.

In an attack on the teak forest, the Republican army succeeded in crippling the wood thieves. Amid, Kiram, Jun, Jalal, and Kang Suyud in the battle could hardly save themselves. At that time, Kang Suyud died because of being sick in his hiding place. They buried Kang Suyud secretly. As Darul Islam warriors, they continued to defend their lives against the Republican army, against the people, and communist forces clandestinely.

In facing various difficulties, they, especially Amid, had a place to ask in all matters. Kiai Ngumar was a Kiai who had a lot of experience and extensive knowledge. Even in the field of organization, especially in the Islamic Society, his experience was intense. It was reasonable if he were appointed as a "teacher" for the four youths. He became a place to consult, especially for Amid. On a particular occasion, Amid always took the time to meet with Kiai Ngumar. With sincerity, the Kiai frequently prayed for Amid's salvation in the world and in the hereafter.

In family matters, Amid was also a good husband. He loved his wife very much, Umi. When they were about to give birth, Kiram and Jun were fully responsible for finding a village midwife. Umi gave birth to a baby girl and was named Sri. Mbok Nikem, a village midwife, did not have the power to see her baby and parents living in the middle of the forest.

Sincerely, she adopted the baby with his mother to live together in the village. Finally, with a heavy heart Amid gave up Mbok Nikem's kind intentions.

One day, Toyib from another Darul Islam army delivered the news that Kartosuwiryo had been captured and surrendered to the Republican army. He advised that all Darul Islam armies surrendered with guaranteed national forgiveness. With a heavy heart, Kiram was forced to obey Amid and Jun. They went down the mountain and gave up weapons. For a month, they were indoctrinated. After that, they were released to back home. It was no longer that there was news of an assault action in Jakarta. PKI members brutally murdered some army generals.

A few days later, Amid, Kiram, and Jun were called to be pioneers in the war against the communist army in Cigodang. By the advice from Semarang, they were under the command of the Republican army. They were ready and full of enthusiasm. In that war, Amid was shot. Before exhaling his last breath, he gave a message about his daughter and wife. Amid was martyred. Kiram and Jun let him go forever.

### **Interpretation Stage**

Amid, Kiram and Jun escaped to the west and returned to the village with a wounded heart. Kiai Ngumar has advised them not to continue their hostility with the Republican army. The three were called the rebels by Republican soldiers.

This was actually because of the betrayal of those who provide the name of the Republican army. The real traitors were communists. The author believed that those who were always committed to doing treason were the communists because they always disappointed other parties, including the Hezbollah people (Tohari, 1999).

Kiram thought Amid had a weak spirit while he remained firm. Finally, Kiram left Kiai. The attitude of leaving Kiai Ngumar was indeed a futile act, but it was understandable because he was uneducated. The action was merely based on muscle violence. The solution to the problem should be with a clear brain coupled with the subtlety of the soul to feel good to all parties.

Some soldiers searched Kiram and Jun at Kiai Ngumar's house, but they were not found. Kiai had to be responsible for their opposition to the Republican forces. Finally, Kiai Ngumar was willing to be guaranteed to be brought to the Republican army commander. Thus was a great of Kiai Ngumar's responsibility towards his chosen children.

As long as the communists stayed in the Republican forces, Kang Suyud did not want to join the Republican forces. "Mid, you have to come with me," said Kiram. "Jalal has joined. We have officially become members of the Darul Islam army. We already have our own country, the Islamic State of Indonesia." Such a statement was clearly in the form of political conflict. They did not recognize the Government of the Republic of Indonesia. It was the wrong attitude because they were not loyal to the official government, Indonesia.

One night, Amid walked 140 km through the forest to his hometown. After crossing a high bamboo fence, he finally arrived at the parents' house that he had left for ten years. His mother hugged Amid in the dark. A child's respect for the mother was very coveted. A meeting between son and mother was very sacred, solemn, more than ten years apart.

Amid met Kiai Ngumar and advised him to go to Cirebon and escaped to Lampung. Jalal had already taken that way. At that time, he lived happily there. According to Kiai, the DI movement had no more hope for life. The general public had considered DI as an enemy. At the same time, the communist forces were getting stronger.

Amid said goodbye to Kiai Ngumar in the middle of the night because of being very old, Kiai Ngumar gave a prayer of salvation to his beloved child. The last meeting made them aware of all the mistakes they had made. Therefore, it was better to apologize first, especially to the closest people, and did not forget to say a prayer for those people's safety. That fact was very human.

Indeed it was better to live among the same people, especially fellow Muslims. Loving and loving forever.

Amid and Umi got married in a hut on the forest's edge, Kang Suyud as the bridegroom in law, Jun and Kiram became witnesses. The process of marriage was a must for humans who are mature enough. In a simple circumstance, legitimate marriages only fulfill the requirements of marriage based on Islam. This had been fulfilled, so Amid and Umi were legitimately husband and wife.

In the niche of the ravine, Amid and Umi lived. Only a month when Umi joined, such a terrible trial came. There was a mass operation of the security forces and hundreds of villagers combing the Cigodang teak forest to arrest Amid, Kiram, and Jun. Simultaneous movements between the security forces and the people to capture the Darul Islam army was good actions because whatever they meant, they were still detrimental to the Indonesian nation.

Seeing this fact, Kiram invited Amid to be ready to fight or be martyred. The author felt disagree if the death of Kiram and Amid was said to be martyred. As rebels, Kiram and Amid could not be considered a martyr as it was reserved for the fighters who were on the right path, not the agitators like them (Tohari 1999).

In a new hiding place, Amid and Umi stayed temporarily. One day, Kiram and Jun went to look for a village midwife because Umi wanted to give birth. They succeeded in bringing Mbok Nikem to help Umi. Kiram and Jun's consciousness to find a village midwife was a noble awareness to help women who want to give birth. Mbok Nikem was a noble village midwife and a real true helper. She neither saw DI children nor children of the Republican army. She could not bear to see a beautiful baby live in the forest. Finally, Mbok Nikem, with a sincere heart, adopted the baby to be her daughter and given the name Sri Sengsara. For the sake of the daughter and her mother's safety, Amid allowed the baby and his wife brought by Mbok Nikem to her village.

Toyib, who stayed in the forest area of Mount Slamet, came to Kiram's place and gave the news that Republican troops captured Kartosuwiryo. He brought a leaflet that told that all DI/TII members to lay down their weapons and surrendered themselves to security forces with national forgiveness guarantees issued by the Republic of Indonesia's Government. Because they were

uneducated, Kiram and Jun were very emotional, and they said that they preferred dying in a battle, and they regretted not fighting mass operation till death. While Amid, with an open heart, was ready to follow the advice of his superiors.

Suddenly Kiram rose and immediately pointed a gun at Amid, but Toyib and Jun immediately brushed aside the weapon. The barrage of shots went to the other way. Toyib and Jun took away Kiram's weapon. According to the writer, Kiram's flared-up emotion was not very good, and his friend would be killed. It would have been better if he had realized his defeat of war and followed his superiors' orders. With difficulty, Kiram was successful in being pacified.

Kiram, Amid, and Jun wrapped their weapons into the sacks. Kiram and Jun shed tears. They obeyed Toyib, who would lead down the mountain. That night they left the Cigodang teak forest. Each day, they got a lecture (indoctrination) for a month, and every day they repeated the promise of the oath of loyalty to the country. In that way, it was hoped that there would be a change of attitude and action of the former DI paramilitary forces to become loyal to the Republic.

Since then, Amid, Kiram, and Jun were released. In the subdistrict city, they reported to the security forces. Arriving at the village, they reported to the village hall. At home, the first news he got was the dead of Amid's father half a year ago. Amid cried, and so did his mother. Amid kissed his mother's hands at the door. As a good son, he had to respect everyone. Amid showed that by kissing his mother's hands. That was the proof of a son's love and affection for his parents.

Amid's wife had gone down the mountain to join them who had given up. Amid picked her up and brought her to his parents' house. Thus, as a responsible, a husband and wife's life had to stay together. Moreover, he had been separated from his wife for a long time. In a state of extreme deprivation, they lived happily ever after.

Because of PKI's influence, many farmers fought each other. The PKI followers frequently burned the teak forests even they killed the teak foreman. One of the frauds of PKI followers was disrupting the population for the benefit of their



group. Therefore the author did not like their behavior. This disgraceful attitude damaged all parties (Tohari, 1999).

The peak of chaos occurred in 1965 due to treason in Jakarta. PKI people killed some army generals, and the murder was carried out very sadistically. This sadism made the writer hated cruelty. At that time, the communists' bodies were scattered at the river, edge of the forest, and in the swamps. That was a reprisal to people who behaved cruelly, sadistically and did not know humanity.

At that time, Amid, Kiram, and Jun were on their way to a very different battle because they would fight on behalf of the Republican army against communist forces. Kiai Ngumar blessed them. Regarding this matter, the author strongly agreed because they would fight in the name of the Republic (Tohari, 1999). In the battle, Amid was shot and killed (martyrdom). Kiram and Jun let him go forever. In the end, they were on the side of the Indonesian people. That is the thing the author hoped for from the start.

Amid died when against the communists in the teak forest. The author felt that Amid's death was a very noble struggle (Tohari, 1999). His final sacrifice was in the struggle against communist cruelty. Similarly, the struggle of Kiram and Jun was. Both of them were on the right side, fighting with the Republican army to crush the communist crime. Kiram and Jun were ultimately on the right side (along with the Republic) destroying the communist forces.

In the novel entitled *Kubah*, Ahmad Tohari was a continuation of the novel *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air*. It was stated that PKI people, especially the high-class ones, were banished to Buru Island. For twelve years, they were prisoned there. "It is not easy for a man (named Karman) to regain his place in society after twelve years living in exile on Buru Island. Moreover, people's hearts have indeed, been hurt. Karman has also lost people who always used to be present in his soul. His wife has married again to another man, his son has been dead, and the remaining ones no longer know him. Karman carries a weighty historical sin, and he is hardly able to bear it. However, during an almost closed life for him, he can still find a ray of love. Karman feels that he finds himself again, finds the dignity of his life ". Karman has now found a straight path, the path to God Almighty.

**Evaluation Stage**

Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air is an exciting novel written by Ahmad Tohari. It talked about the illustration of Indonesian people's lives since the days of the Darul Islam (DI) gang and communist gangs (PKI), which undermined the legitimate Government of the Republic of Indonesia. The author has a straightforward attitude and simple that can be seen in the manner to dress, talk, and drive. As stated by Harbunangin (2018) that the author is indeed simple in appearance but not in thinking and pondering.

This study used pragmatic criticism because as stated by Yudiono (2009), the critics viewed literary works' meaning as greeters of literary works. Started with the Darul Islam army under the leadership of Kartosuwiryo intended to establish the Islamic State of Indonesia. Kang Suyud, as the DI leader in the Cigodang living in the teak forest, was very strict. Amid, Kiram, Jun, and Jalal as his men were dexterous humans, especially in various battles against the Dutch, Republican soldiers, and the Siluman Movement (PKI). Overall, what they conducted was wrong because when Kartosuwiryo was arrested, the whole army had to put down their weapons and surrendered.

Hezbollah force was formed among the people. Amid, Kiram, Jun and Jalal were formerly members of Hezbollah, but they became the Darul Islam army because of certain things. In a family relationship, Amid respected his parents and loved his wife very much. When his wife was about to give birth, Kiram and Jun searched for a village midwife, Mbok Nikem. Mbok Nikem was very human. She helped Umi, who gave birth to Amid's daughter and wanted to take her and take care of her to her hometown.

When there was an act of treason in Jakarta, some Army Generals were brutally murdered by PKI members. In the end, the PKI was dissolved. Those who were in an elite position were exiled to Buru Island. For years they were prisoned there. This action was an excellent decision for the Republic of Indonesia's security and the people's safety and the heart of the people. Hopefully, the two groups (DI / TII and PKI) would no longer appear on our beloved Earth, Aameen.

**Conclusion**

The *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air* novel by Ahmad Tohari is a novel that is very interesting, beautiful, unique, and valuable in literature. The author of the novel's pragmatic criticism is a fair criticism. After all, it is beneficial for readers because it contains religious values.

The novel tells the story about four young people named Amid, Kiram, Jun, and Jalal. At first, they learned martial arts from Kiai Ngumar because of security demands. They entered Hezbollah. In the war against the Dutch, Hezbollah forces assisted Republican forces. The relationship between the two forces was not good. Misunderstandings frequently happened, even almost a shootout occurred between the two. After the relations between the two returned, the Hezbollah forces were offered to join the Republican army. Kang Suyud and Kiram refused the offer because they wanted to be independent. Eventually, Kang Suyud formed new armed forces Oemat Islam (DI/TII), under its top leadership named Kartosuwiryo.

As a member of DI/TII, Amid, Kiram, Jun, and Jalal are experienced in various tensions. They are often committed to robbed and killed against their opponents. Their actions frequently harmed the Republican army and people. When Kartosuwiryo was captured, all DI/TII forces surrendered. Amid, Kiram, and Jun did too. They were indoctrinated for a month, and after that, they were released.

The peak of the riots occurred in Jakarta in 1965. PKI people brutally murdered some army generals. Amid, Kiram, and Jun were asked for help by the Republican army to crush the PKI people in the Cigodang teak forest. Under the leadership of the Republican army, they vigorously fought the PKI people. However, unfortunately, Amid died (martyrdom) as one of the Indonesian nation's heroes in the battle. The PKI was dissolved, and its elite was exiled to Buru Island.

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