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THE BEAUTY OF ROMANCE AND RELIGIOUS THOUGHTS IN HAMKA'S NOVELS

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ABSTRACT

Have we ever imagined the world without love? In any field, approach and culture, people will talk about love and the importance of feeling the sense of belonging. Every religion either, promotes love. In such areas as religious preaching in Islam, the term “love” mostly used to relate mankind with God. Nonetheless, it is rare to find a prominent scholar to describe or write about love of a romantic relationship between a man and a woman before the marriage contract been signed. It is neither the essential context nor the substantial significance, rather, it is regarded as a serious issue in Muslim community. Hence, the creative writing of this thematic relationship is apparently isolated. Ironically, this was among the remarkable works of Hamka, a well-known prominent Nusantara Muslim scholar in the early twentieth century. In his famous novel *Di Bawah Lindungan Ka'bah*, Hamka portrayed an Islamic theme on the absolute title, but he made a very different atmosphere in the contents of the whole dramatic novel. On the other hand, he had cynically criticized the tradition of Minangkabau in his splendid romantic novels *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck*, and *Merantau Ke Deli*. Here, there are some questions to be pointed out, is it an Islamic acceptance by an-attempt of advising Muslim societies through a romantic writing? Instead of politely criticizing the traditions of his people, are there other purposes in his creative writings? How can the Muslim communities, in specific, accept the ideas of *dakwah* in this clash style?

Key Words: Romance, *Dakwah*, Minangkabau traditions

1. INTRODUCTION

Hamka is an example of the world's extraordinary role model. He was a religious preacher and teacher, a nation builder, an author of philosophy, tasawuf and love stories and a public figure of his well-known Minangkabau people who regard women at a higher standard than men. Ironically, Hamka stood against his realm's tradition. He left the biggest legacy in Nusantara's world of culture and education. His popularity started earlier at the age of twenty when he began to write a novel called '*Si Sabariah*.'

Later in between 1935 to 1940 in his late twenties, Hamka wrote the prestigious romantic novels, religious and philosophical books of its time. A. Kasim and Muhamad (2015) listed in their article some of his popular novels such as *Di Bawah Lindungan Ka'bah* (translated Under the Shade of Ka'bah), *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck* (The Sink of the Van Der Wijck Ship) *Tuan Direktur* (The Director), *Di Jemput Mamaknya* (Invited by Aunt), *Di Dalam Lembah Kehidupan* (In the Valley of Life), *Keadilan Ilahi* (Lord's Justice), *Merantau Ke Deli* (Migrated to Deli) and many more. In addition, among his scholarly books such as *Tawasuf Modern* (Modern Tasawuf), *Falsafah Hidup* (The philosophy of Life), *Lembaga Hidup* (The Institution of Life), *Lembaga Budi* (The Institution of Character), *Kenang-Kenangan Hidup* (Memories of Life), *Sejarah Umat Islam* (The History of the Nation of Islam), and the most influent one in the Islamic academic and education is his interpretation of Al-Quran known as *Tafsir Al-Azhar*.

When talking about love, people can easily imagine the romance scene or romantic words and songs. This is in fact normal in any piece of lifestyle, culture and even religion. Basically, it is rare to find a prominent Muslim scholar to describe or write about love of a romantic relationship between a man and a woman before the marriage contract been signed. But this was among Hamka's remarkable works. Everyone made known that there is no romantic relationship in Islam between man and woman before marriage and the love story should only begin after the solemnization declared. Having said that, Hamka seemed had twisted the idea of this 'love story' in most of his novels. Furthermore, if it involved the religious practice of Islam, the term "love" mostly used to relate mankind with God.

The article proposed three important aspects. Firstly, to what extent a romantic writing style is accepted as an Islamic approach as according to its objectives and significances? Secondly, to what extent people may understand Hamka's creative writings are beyond criticizing the traditions of his people? And thirdly, to what extent the Muslim communities, in specific, accept the ideas of *dakwah* (Islamic preaching) in this clash style of writing?

Therefore, Hamka's approaches in his romantic novels are of unlimited exploration. In this article, the linguistic and literary features will be the contagious links between the beauty of romance and religious thoughts in Hamka's novels. Thus, it shows that Hamka's style of romance in novel writing is a part of semantic approach and contains the subliminal messages. It finally proves that Hamka actually had included the element of *dakwah* as a major objective in his literary works, wholly and quietly.

The method that has been used in this study is qualitative research method and consists of the scholarly books and academic articles source of data, and at the same time refers Hamka's well-known creative and critical writings.

2. DOES ROMANCE REALLY EXIST IN MINANGKABAU'S CULTURE?

In his cynical critics about the norms of the Minangkabau practice, there are some perspectives that can be explained. It illustrated the existence of ideal and real cultures which are seemed to be akin but in fact both are different. Macionis (2002) said that the norms ideally describe what people should do, but what really occurs may have the opposite view. Hamka spoiled the beautiful romantic relationship of a married couple in teaching his realm not to do that. In the novel *Merantau Ke Deli*, Hamka expressed that the matrilineal tradition of Minang broke the relationship of Leman and his wife Poniem, a Javanese woman who had followed her husband back to his village but was hated by the people. Because of his pride and strong belief in his tradition, Leman, who had succeeded solely because of Poniem's sacrifices, divorced her and soon married a Minang woman. Poniem was very sad and forcedly left the village and all what she had started with Leman.

It is clear from this novel that the romance is not at all a cultural norm, rather, it is formed by a sincere heart and a soul who is fear of its God. Divorce without a concrete and valid reason is not an ethical action to be made by a husband. As a matter of fact, Allah has made men the protectors and the maintainers to the women. Allah says in Surah Al-Nisa, verse 34:

"Men are in charge of women by (right of) what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend (for maintenance) from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in (the husband's) absence what Allah would have them guard. But those (wives) from whom you fear arrogance – (first) advise them; [then if they persist], forsake them in bed; and (finally), strike them. But if they obey you (once more), seek no means against them. Indeed, Allah is ever Exalted and Grand."

As a religious man, Hamka silently inserted the Islamic values and it is upon those who can see the light will feel the wisdom. Hamka also quoted a beautiful statement about a woman's heart, and in this novel it told the love of Poniem to Leman was sincere and faithful. Hamka said:

'Ajaib hati perempuan! Dia tidak suka ditipu, dia tidak sudi dipermainkan. Cintanya kepada orang lain, adalah bererti cinta terhadap dirinya sendiri.'

This has shown that the author of this secretive value of romance was really a great teacher and interpreter. In the footsteps of our Prophet (peace be upon him), the best Muslim is the one who does the best to his wife and family, and the best woman is the one who obeys Allah, the Prophet and her husband. This is one of the levels of understanding which the readers should sort out when they are analyzing the romantic elements in Hamka's novels. By thoroughly studying his novel, more Islamic perspectives can be related and dug up.

Likewise, the story of Lemah and Poniem can be categorized as inter-cultural influence on a thematic romance story. Perhaps to understand this, it is better to look into the Minangkabau culture itself, whether it created constraint or freedom. Macionis identified that culture as constraint symbolizes material orientation. Unlike culture as freedom that promotes the right of choice and improvement, culture as constraint encompasses habit, choice limitations and troubling patterns repetition and it breaks the excellence that a particular society looks for instead of its emphasis in competitive achievement towards the people. This is mostly the matter that Hamka tried to carry out in his novels by criticizing his society particularly on marital issues.

Hamka made a romantic cynical story of the Minangkabau tradition when the maternal uncles have the final decision in his niece's future of marital status. This tradition killed Hamid and Zainab, whom had fallen in love to each other without anyone knew and the only matter that denied both to get married was this solid Minangkabau tradition. Moreover, Hamid was a very poor man and was supported by Zainab's family in his upbringings in the village.

Hamka once again portrayed the hard core tradition of the Minangkabau people that was very oppressive. Hamka wrote beautiful passages which were full of imaginations and in a constructed rhetorical way to tell the audience the effect of love in Hamid's life. He just found that Zainab was really in love with him after about two years he had been separated himself from the village and the people:

"Tuhan!" ...telah bertahun-tahun saya berjalan di dalam gelap gulita, tidak tentu tanah yang akan saya tempuh, tidak kelihatan suatu bintang pun di atas halaman langit akan saya jadikan pedoman dalam menuju perjalanan itu. Demi setelah sampai berita yang demikian, seakan-akan kegelapan itu terang dari sedikit ke sedikit, sebab dari timur mengelembantang cahaya fajar, cahaya yang saya nanti-nanti. Cahaya itu lebih benderang daripada cahaya surya, lebih nyaman dari cahaya bulan dan lebih dingin dari kelip-kelip bintang-bintang.

Saya hidup laksana seorang buangan yang tersisih pada suatu padang belantara yang jauh, laksana seorang bersalah besar yang dibuang ke pulau, tiada manusia yang datang menengok, tidak ada kawan yang melihat, ditimpa haus dan dahaga. Sekarang saya telah lepas daripada pembuangan, saya telah dibolehkan pulang dan beroleh ampun, telah ada manusia, yang lalu lintas, telah hilang haus dan dahaga. Sekarang baru saya tahu, baru saya mengerti, bahwa sukacita itu ada juga dijadikan Tuhan di dalam dunia fana ini.

Based on the same Quranic verse, Allah made a clear conclusion that the desire for love of woman is a natural existence created in human's soul. Every man deserves love. It is not a sinful act unless it is done in the ways prohibited by God. The beautiful arrangement of cultural, religious and rhetorical elements marked up Hamka's cynical way in criticizing yet indirectly advising his people in this matter. Not only that, the power of imaginations also remarked in his novels and it proved the world that Hamka is a symbolic Nusantara heritage of language and literature, as well as a nation builder for the next generation after him who probably have been familiarized with a freedom culture as identified in his authentic advice.

3. THE QURANIC STYLISTIC OF 'SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP'

As the primary source, Al-Quran has been referred by both Muslims and non-Muslims to study about the Islamic legislations and regulations in the daily life. Allah highlights the law of attractions between man and woman in very significant yet semantically understandable verses. This is something that Hamka did not follow in his romantic novel writing. The question is; did Hamka make mistakes in his attempt to do *dakwah* to other people of Minang tradition?

The answer is; no. He had made no mistakes in his style of writing. It was a descriptive

writing about the societies and not to insult any kind-soul; male or female. Here is the judicious observation between the Book of Guidance and the mankind's writing.

Before going into depth, have a look into the Quranic stylistic. The verses that mentioned about the basic or special relationship between both genders are indirectly made clear. This is for the purpose of honour and educational attitudes. Hence, it is exactly corresponded with the linguistic and semantic systems. The methods used in Al-Quran to describe either the factual, permissible or prohibited relationships are respectively according to the contexts and the responders.

Meanwhile, there is no prohibition to make explanation or to obtain the fundamental knowledge from Al-Quran. As well as the examples of those 'semantically understandable' verses of the relationship between both male and female, the meaning can still be extracted and applied into daily life. In Surah Ali Imran, verse 14, Allah explained the nature existence of lust in a normal human being, as He said:

"Beautified for people is the love of that which they desire – of women and sons, heaped-up sums of gold and silver, fine branded horses, and cattle and tilled land. That is the enjoyment of worldly life, but Allah has with Him the best return."

In this factual verse, Allah explained in a long explanation that the desire of a normal man is not limited to the lust upon a beloved spouse only but also expended to having offspring, properties and nobility. This, as a matter of fact, brings such a deeper reflection on a nature of a human being that wants and needs 'everything' that related to himself.

Undoubtedly, Hamka followed this verse interpretation and made a symbolic meaning of having a soul mate. In the novel *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck*, he described Zainuddin's fall-in-love conditions:

"Demikianlah perjuangan batin yang begitu hebat telah terjadi, perasaan cinta yang mulai subur, tetapi dilambai oleh angin ketakutan. Sehingga besoknya pagi-pagi, setelah matahari terbit dan Zainuddin bangun dari tidurnya, dia merasa takut dan malu akan bertemu dengan Hayati, takut suratnya tidak akan diterima. Bila dia lalu pada suatu jalan, dia berjalan tergesa-gesa, takut akan bertemu dengan Hayati, akan menentang wajahnya yang molek, seakan-akan menyesal dia rasanya mengirim surat itu. Apalagi telah sehari, setelah dua hari surat dikirimkan, tidak mendapat balasan apa-apa, sehingga mengalir keringat di keningnya menengangkan itu, terasa benar olehnya kasar budinya."

The stylistic and structured sentences of an easy Malay-Nusantara language formed by Hamka were outstanding and concrete. Hamka's brilliant similes and logical metaphors were exposed dramatically and no secondary interpretation needed to explain Zainuddin's unfamiliar feeling because it is visible and natural.

The stylistics created by Hamka in describing people or occasions are somehow following the flow of the Quranic descriptive explanation of Allah's power and closeness. In a scene in the same novel when Zainuddin's heart was broken by the same lady, Hayati, Muluk came to him and counseled him with a long Islamic advice. In a paragraph, Hamka wrote as Muluk said to Zainuddin this beautiful speech:

"Di dalam alam yang terbentang di muka kita, di awan-awan yang berarak, di sungai yang mengalir, di burung yang terbang tinggi, di kulik elang tengahari, di kokok ayam, di halaman, di puncak gunung meningkat awan, pendeknya di mana-mana pun, terbentanglah pengobat hati dan jiwa. Di sana tersembunyi pokok-pokok untuk kebahagiaan hidup."

And earlier, we should see the Quranic verses as Allah says in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 163-164:

"And your god is one God. There is no deity (worthy of worship) except Him, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful. Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, and the (great) ships which sail through the sea with that which benefits people, and what Allah has sent down from the heavens of rain, giving life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness and dispersing therein every (kind of) moving creature, and (His) directing of the winds and the clouds controlled between the heaven and the earth are signs for a

people who use reason.”

It has shown very clearly that Hamka, as a man of Islamic knowledge who studied religion at his early teenage age, was conscious about the importance of Al-Quran as a primary source of and made it reference in every kind of writing. Indirectly, the readers will see his most wise advice appears from the behind of every romantic sentence.

Another great point that can be related to romance-religious factor in Hamka’s creative writing is the existence of God’s love. As mentioned earlier, the love of God is the essential component in religious approaches. Hamka made a tremendous short love story between a Muslim man and a Christian woman entitled ‘*Malam Sekaten (Bulan Sabit dan Kayu Palang)*’ or translated as ‘The Night of Mawlid (The Crescent and The Cross) in a compilation entitled ‘*Di Dalam Lembah Kehidupan.*’ Mawlid refers to the Prophet Muhammad SAW’s birthday. Atma, a faithful Muslim man had fallen in love with a woman whom he had helped at a festival on a Night of Mawlid and he found out her name as Warnidah. According to the name, she must be a Muslim Malay woman. After the night, they separated and did not meet for a few months until they accidentally bumped into each other while they were both having vacation in the same place. Atma finally told Warnidah that he loves her, and she told him that she also had the same feeling towards Atma. However, Warnidah revealed the truth about her religion and showed the cross she wore on her neck to Atma. Previously, Warnidah had told Atma not to ask and know her name because it would not be a good thing for him and in fact, she insisted this matter to herself too.

After recognizing the major difference of religious background, Atma quickly realized the reality that already awaited him and Warnidah, if they were meant to continue the love relationship. Again, Hamka provided a bright factual declaration of Atma’s faithful decision:

Setelah perasaan yang sangat terharu itu mulai agak reda, Atma pun berkata: “Sudahlah, Warnidah! Sesungguhnya kehidupan kita ini tengah merasai cubaan Allah, cubaan atas iman dan keyakinan kita masing-masing. Tetapi sebagai kau katakan tadi, cinta itu adalah bebas. Kian sulit langkahnya, kian suburlah hidupnya, hanya kewajipan kita menjaga supaya suburnya itu dalam kesucian.

Agamaku tiada melarang aku kahwin dengan engkau, Warnidah, tak berhalangan. Tetapi hal itu pun bergantung kepada perasaan hatimu, paksaan dalam agamaku tak pula ada. Sebab itu, kalau sekiranya cinta itu tak dapat kita paterikan dengan perkahwinan, marilah kita paterikan dengan benda yang lebih suci, yang tak mahu putus selama-lamanya, iaitu persahabatan.”

In Al-Quran, Allah has made some faith confirmations which Muslims cannot disrupt. He says in Surah Ali Imran, verse 31-32:

“Say, (O Muhammad), "If you should love Allah, then follow me, (so) Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful." Say, "Obey Allah and the Messenger." But if they turn away - then indeed, Allah does not like the disbelievers.”

Also, Allah says in Surah Ali Imran, verse 19:

“Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam. And those who were given the Scripture did not differ except after knowledge had come to them - out of jealous animosity between themselves. And whoever disbelieves in the verses of Allah, then indeed, Allah is swift in (taking) account.”

When Atma mentioned to Warnidah that Islam does not force anyone to be a Muslim, it was basically according to Allah’s word in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 256:

“There shall be no compulsion in (acceptance of) the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in Taghut and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing.”

The remarkable part of the story was its ending when Hamka once again wrote a meet-up moment between Atma and Warnidah. At this scene, Hamka portrayed Warnidah in a nun religious attire walking with other nuns and suddenly she saw Atma, who has just finished his

Islamic studies and on his way back to hometown. No word came out from both of them, while the church gate was opened and the church bell began to call its faithful followers to prayer.

The scene was serene, each faithful soul tried to recall the unforgotten memories that they shared. Finally, they chose the religion and act like strangers to each other. Here, Hamka left to the believers the right answer and it was the love of Allah:

“Di muka sebuah klooster dia berhenti, terkejut, sebab di antaranya ialah.....Warnidah! dia telah memakai pakaian rahib.

Maka bertemulah pandangan keduanya; Warnidah berhenti langkahnya. Belum sempat kedua-dua mereka bersahut-sahutan mulut, tiba-tiba pintu gereja itu terbuka, dari puncak menaranya yang tinggi kedengaran dengong loceng amat kerasnya, menyeru para paderi masuk ke dalam akan sembahyang.

Warnidah menoleh kepada Atma sebentar, Atma tegak dengan bingung dan sayu. Paderi-paderi perempuan itu pun masuklah beriring-iringan, dalam dengongan bunyi loceng. Warnidah pun berserta dengan mereka itu.

Beberapa saat kemudian kedengaranlah suara orang sembahyang di dalam gereja itu, diiringi dengan nyanyian yang merdu, akan meneguhkan imannya.....

Atma melangkahkan kakinya pergi dari tempat itu, dan Magelang hilanglah selamanya dari matanya.

4. CONCLUSION

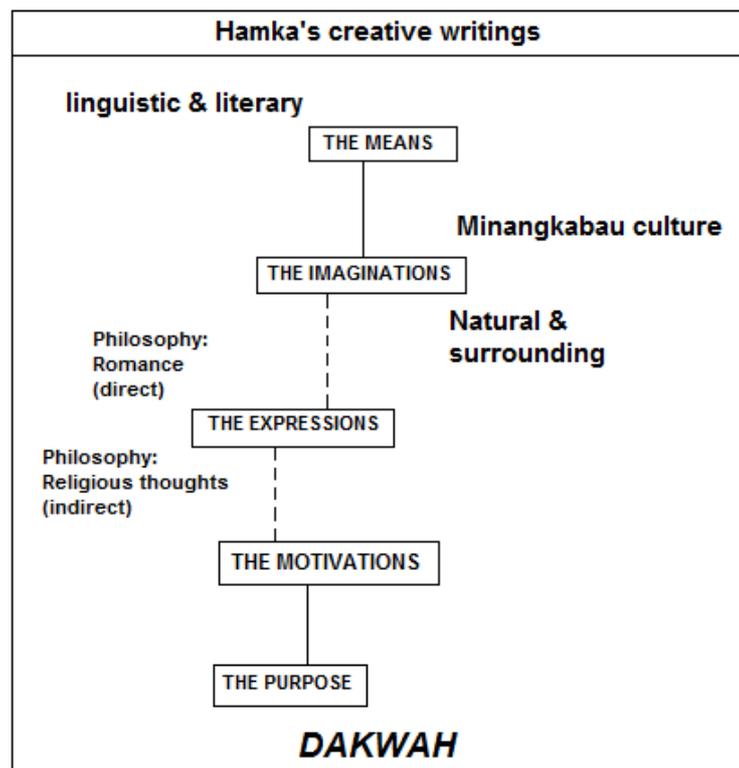


Figure 1: The Components of Hamka’s Creative Writings/Novels

Hamka’s romance is a thematic approach to convey the Islamic awareness and teachings. There is no surprise that he used critics, wordlessly, to reach everyone’s attention. As a prominent Muslim scholar, Hamka had put Al-Quran and hadith as his sources. The stylistics of the words used in his romance novel proved it. He translated his religious thoughts into an ordinary paperwork where all levels of nations can benefit from his deep philosophy of beautifulness. In fact, love, according to Hamka, is always a beautiful thing created by Allah.

The creative writings in Hamka's legacy are full of imaginations too and this is, ironically, an achievement after putting the commands of Allah at the highest level. Abdussalam (1999) said that the three stages of internal processes of speech act identified by Al-Nawawi and Ibn al-Qayyim are clues which exist in man's mind, imagination which is regarded as the translation of the clues and intention which is a strong motivation to change the imaginations into words. Both agreed that as a believing Muslim, his imagination and motivation to use the words are not controlled by himself, rather, it is guided by the virtues taught by the religion.

According to Hamka in his book 'Kenang-Kenangan Hidup,' an artist is the one who reflected what he sees and hears around him. He deeply feels the beauty and ugliness which finally guide him to imagination. He understands all kinds of events of life; poverty, killing, oppression and colonialism and these lead him to create imaginations. Because of those miseries, he can imagine the meaning of richness, peace, justice and freedom. The creation of arts, which combines all elements that he imagined, becomes the second pillar. Here is where the literature starts either in words, writings, drawings or even music. With the strong combination of deep feeling and imagination, an artist will reach the peak of beauty.

Besides, it is important to understand the main purpose in creative writing. It is basically a reflective-natural way to express the true life that a person lives in it. It requires not only the surrounding and the reality, but also the powerful intelligence of mind and emotion on how to send the messages to other people to make them see the meanings, and finally do something good with those meanings. Izutsu (1956) who was keen on this bond had given his estimation and said:

"The point is that language has an intrinsic expressiveness of a very peculiar sort: besides the well-known functions of directly referring to the 'things meant' and of arousing feelings and emotions, it has a certain power of making the 'things meant' real and alive once again at the level of linguistic expression. It is not exactly the power to evoke images, for imagery, though in actual fact it is very often a powerful help to intuition, is not in itself a necessary ingredient of the intrinsic expressiveness of which we are now speaking. It is rather a peculiar power of evoking something of the living reality, the very colour and flavour of the living concrete which surrounds the denotatum of a word." (pp. 100).

Hamka is a role model. His thoughts skipped over his time and made a huge contribution to the next generation. He had built in specific elements in his writing style and had given chances of explorations to the scholars and the students after him. *Dakwah* is a not a new theme in studying Hamka's works which is specifically related to Minangkabau tradition, yet the new findings are still available from his world of knowledge and wisdom.

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