



SOCIAL REALITY IN CHILDREN'S STORY *HEI, ALGA* BY CIKIE WAHAB

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Abstract. Having a complete and happy family is every child's dream. However, it cannot be denied that many realities often do not match expectations. As happened to Alga, the main character of the children's story *Hei, Alga* by Cikie Wahab. A twelve-year-old boy who has to endure the harsh realities of life. His mother became a migrant worker, while his father rarely came home. He lives with his cruel aunt and his naughty cousin. This research was conducted to analyze the social reality problems that exist in the children's story *Hei, Alga* by Cikie Wahab. This book was the favorite winner in the 2019 Jakarta Arts Council competition. The method used is qualitative descriptive. Data is selected and analyzed purposefully. The approach used in this research is a literary sociology approach with social reality theory. Based on the research results, the social reality problems found were family disorganization, poverty, crime, the problems of the young generation in modern society, and the environmental issues of living.

Keywords: Social Reality, Children Story

1. Introduction

Literature talks about various life problems that occur around humans. Eagelton [1] defines literature as imaginative writing Saxby [2] said that literature is essentially an image of life, a picture of life. The image of life can be understood as a concrete depiction of life models found in factual life so that it is easy to imagine when reading. Likewise with children's literature. Children's literature contains universal images of life but is concise and brief. The difference between adult literature and children's literature lies in the child's reach of the images and life metaphors presented. In children's literature, both the form of the story and its content must be able to be reached and understood by children according to their level of mental development. Children's literature is believed to have a major contribution to the development of children's personalities as they progress towards maturity. Literature is believed to be able to be used as a means to plant, cultivate, develop, and even preserve good and very valuable educational values by the family, community, and nation [3].

In general, Lukens [4] groups children's literature genres into six types, namely realism, formula fiction, fantasy, traditional literature, poetry, and non-fiction, each of which has several more types. Realism in literature can be understood to mean that the story being told may have existed and happened, although it does not necessarily mean that it actually existed and happened. There are several stories that can be categorized into realism, namely realistic stories, animal realism, historical realism, and sports stories [2]. The children's story *Hey, Alga* by Cikie Wahab is a story in the realism genre which is categorized as a realistic story. This is because realistic stories usually tell stories about social problems by presenting the protagonist as the protagonist of the story. The problems faced by the characters are

the source of the development of conflict and storyline. The conflict narrated can be related to problems of oneself, other people, or social problems, and is realistic as found in everyday life [2].

The children's story *Hey, Alga* by Cikie Wahab tells the story of a twelve-year-old child named Alga who lives separately from his parents. Alga cannot have a harmonious and complete family like every child dreams of. The bitter reality he faces is that he spent his childhood at his aunt's house. He grew up with his naughty cousin Tobi. His mother was a migrant worker who left when he was little. His mother never provided news about his whereabouts or condition. Even though little Alga is always waiting for his mother to come to meet him or give him news Alga doesn't always wonder about his condition and whereabouts. Alga's father has to work far from where he lives. Only occasionally does his father come to visit Alga and ask how he is doing. The arrival of the father algae never took long. His father only came to give his aunt money as compensation for taking care of him. Apart from the story of Alga and her family, this book also tells about the conditions of society that influence Alga's life.

This book is one of the hopeful winners of the children's story competition held by the Jakarta Arts Council (DKJ) in 2019. In that competition, the jury deemed that there were no works worthy of being placed 1-3rd place. However, the jury selected 9 stories which were named hopeful winners. This certainly makes the children's story *Hey, Alga* special because it is part of a work that is considered good by the jury. The character Alga, who lives a miserable, gloomy life and faces many problems, is depicted as surviving even though he is being tossed about by the fate that brings him. The reality of his life makes for an interesting analysis when viewed from the perspective of literary sociology.

Literary sociology is an approach in literary studies that understands and evaluates literary works by considering social or societal aspects [5]. According to Wellek and Warren [5], studying literary works focuses on content, objectives, and other aspects related to social problems. Sociological studies of literary works see literature as a representation of society. Literary works are considered as a reflection or re-imagining of the reality of life that occurs in society.

The reality faced by Alga is a real form of social reality. The problems faced by the character Alga are a reflection of the real condition of society. According to Soekanto [6], the disadvantages that society considers a social problem depend on the society's social value system. However, there are several problems faced by society in general, namely the following: (a) poverty, (b) crime, (c) family disorganization, (d) problems of the younger generation in modern society, (e) war, (f) violations of societal norms, (g) population problems, (h) the environmental issue of living, (i) bureaucracy.

2. Method

The method used is descriptive qualitative. The qualitative descriptive method is a research method carried out by describing facts or data in detail and clearly which is then continued with the analysis stage [7]. The same thing was conveyed by Nugrahani [8] that the aim of qualitative descriptive research is to understand a context or condition by leading to an in-depth description of a portrait of conditions in a natural context. Ratna [7] added that qualitative descriptive research is carried out by interpreting data in the form of words, phrases, sentences, and dialogue between characters.

The main source of data in this study is the children's story *Hei, Alga* by Cikie Wahab. The data is classified and analyzed to find out social reality problems that exist in the children's story *Hei, Alga* by Cikie Wahab by using the sociological approach to literature. After analysis, the data is presented in narrative text. The final stage of data analysis is drawing conclusions.

3. Result and Discussion

According to Soekanto [6], the discussions that are considered social problems by society depend on the social value system of that society. However, there are a number of issues faced by society in general, such as (a) poverty, (b) crime, (c) family disorganization, (d) problems of the younger generation in

modern society, (e) war, (f) violations of societal norms, (g) population problems, (h) the environmental issue of living, (i) bureaucracy

The social reality problems found in this children's story were family disorganization, poverty, crime, the problems of the young generation in modern society, and the environmental issues of living.

a. Poverty

Soekanto [6] said that poverty here is understood as a condition in which a person is unable to maintain himself according to the standard of living of the group and is not able to use his mental and physical energy in the group. In the children's story Hey, Alga by Cikie Wahab, Alga is described as a child who was not born into a rich family. Alga lives with her aunt's family because her father and mother have to work. His mother, who worked in Singapore as a migrant worker, never came to visit or give him money. Meanwhile, his father rarely visited him, only coming occasionally when he had to give money to his aunt as compensation for accommodating Alga in her house. This is a tough reality of life for a 12 year old child to live with.

The family's poor condition meant that Alga had to look for a side job so that he could meet his living and school needs. This is as seen in the following.

Kebiasaanku menahan lapar bukan tanpa alasan. Itu karena aku butuh biaya untuk sekolah. Betul sekali apa yang Maria katakana waktu itu. Sebab aku sudah duduk di kelas enam dan ujian akhir semakin dekat, itu artinya aku butuh biaya. Aku harus bisa menyelesaikan pendidikan di sekolah dasar terlebih dahulu [9].

This quote describes the social reality of poverty experienced by the character Alga. To collect money, Alga is willing to endure his hunger. This is done so that Alga can continue his education to a higher level after elementary school.

Apart from Alga, there is also the character Maria who is depicted as having to struggle to be able to continue her studies due to lack of funds. Maria's mother worked as a laundry worker with a mediocre income. It is widely heard that Maria dreams of having a rich father so that they can immediately overcome the poverty they face. The poverty experienced by the character Maria can be seen through the following.

Maria berhenti sekolah setahun yang lalu. Ibunya yang bekerja sebagai buruh cuci merasa tidak mampu lagi membayar sekolah Maria sejak ayahnya meninggal dunia (9)

b. Crime

The criminal behavior a person commits can be caused by changes and social conditions that can trigger other social behaviors. This social change or condition leads to two conclusions: fluctuations in crime rates and relationships with the social organization where crime occurs, which determine the process by which a person becomes a criminal. Sociologists attempt to determine the processes that cause someone to become a criminal. This analysis is social-psychological in nature. Some experts emphasize several forms of processes such as imitation, implementation of social roles, differential associations, compensation, identification, personal self-concept, and aggressive disappointment as processes that cause someone to become a criminal [6]

Social reality not only occurs in the real world but is also depicted in works literature (10) In the children's story Hey, Alga by Cikie Wahab, the social reality of crime is depicted in the theft committed by Mintuo, the aunt of the character Alga. Mintuo takes the money the Alga character got from herding Mr. Zul's goats. Alga put the money in an envelope in his room. Mintuo used the money earned from Alga's sweat as a down payment for the installment purchase of a refrigerator.

Aku sadar dengan yang diucapkan Tobi. Anak itu membuatku lemas seketika, apalagi setelah melihat kulkas setinggi tubuhku itu ada di dapur, lalu aku bergegas ke kamar dan menyaksikan uangku raib dari dalam amplop [9]

The character Alga is said to be very sad due to the crime of theft committed by Mintuo. Even though Mintuo is his aunt, Alga believes that Mintuo cannot just take Alga's money arbitrarily. Alga collected quite a bit of money by holding back her desire and desire to buy snacks. Mintuo bought a refrigerator so that his son Tobi could drink cold water whenever he wanted. Mintuo committed this crime because he wanted to provide for his son Tobi. Mintuo played her role as a good mother to Tobi by buying a refrigerator so that Tobi would no longer have difficulty drinking his favorite iced drink.

Another conflict faced by the character Alga was when Alga was lent a watch by Maria. Alga thought the watch really belonged to Maria so Alga felt there was no problem if she used it. Especially after Maria offered the watch to him to wear. This actually backfired on Alga. Maria apparently took Genta's watch.

When Genta reported the incident to the school, Mrs. Yuan immediately carried out an inspection of the class. The aim of the examination was to find where Genta's watch was. Initially, Alga felt that he was innocent. However, many testimonies say that Alga wears the same watch as Genta. After checking, it turned out that the watch really belonged to Genta. All the children in the class think that Alga is the one who hid Genta's watch. Until finally Alga had to be punished in the form of cleaning the boys' toilet and was not allowed to be helped by anyone. This is seen in the following

“Kau berhasil membuat seluruh teman-teman membenciku dan menuduh aku sebagai pencuri jam itu.” Rasa kesalku kembali muncul [9].

For Alga, stealing is something that is not commendable. But fooling other people and making them scapegoats for theft is very cruel. It was Maria who had exposed him to negative accusations. Because of Maria, she was hated by her friends and had to be ostracized. Maria took Genta's watch because she liked the beauty of the watch and wanted to have a similar watch.

c. Family disorganization

According to [6] family disorganization is the division of the family as a unit, because its members fail to fulfill their obligations that correspond to their social roles. Family disorganization may occur in simple societies because the husband as head of the family fails to meet the family's primary needs or perhaps because he remarries. In general, these problems are caused by difficulties in adapting to cultural demands.

The story of Alga, who has a disharmonious family, dominates this child's story. Alga, a 12-year-old child who has to grow up without a mother figure, feels like he doesn't get the love he deserves. Initially, Alga always hoped to meet her mother again. Alga finds out where her mother is and waits for news from her. However, that hope was just a dream that he could not achieve. Since he was 9 years old, his mother's telephone number could no longer be reached. Even though there were many things he wanted to tell his mother. This is illustrated in the following quote.

Ibu pernah meneleponku dari sana, tapi setelah beberapa lama ia tidak pernah lagi meneleponku. Aku berkali-kali mencari tahu dan mencoba menghubungi nomor telepon ibu untuk mengabarkan tentang masakanku, nilai ulanganku atau juga tentang Tobi yang sering kali mengerjaiku sepulang sekolah. Tapi nomor telepon ibu tak pernah aktif sejak tiga tahun lalu. Aku sudah terbiasa menghapus air mataku dan kini aku merasa ibu tidak ingin aku menelepon dirinya [9].

Apart from her mother figure, Alga also feels that her father doesn't pay enough attention to her. Alga's father works outside the city and only visits him once a month. Alga always wants to hug her father when his father comes and tell him how much Alga misses his father. But his father always thought Alga was sappy. Meanwhile, as a man, Alga cannot be a crybaby. He had to be strong and get used to it if one day his father would leave him. Alga's dislike of solitude and abandonment appears in the following quote.

Aku menunduk. Rasanya seperti ditinggalkan ayahku sekali lagi. Kenapa orang dewasa suka berbuat seenaknya seperti ini? Aku ingin menangis, tapi masih bisa kutahan. [9].

Alga pretends to be a strong personal figure. This social reality in the form of disharmonious families is often found in society. The roles and functions of parents that should be fulfilled are often neglected and inadequate. Alga can only endure the pain of her life through suppressed tears. Alga can only keep her memories with her parents through the photos she keeps in her father's suitcase. Alga's desire to have a complete and complete family is written in the following quote.

Aku pun merasa lahir dari koper itu. Sebab ada hal-hal yang ayah dan ibu simpan di dalamnya. Aku jadi merindukan mereka dan ingin merasakan bagaimana rasanya memiliki keluarga yang lengkap [9]

d. The problem the younger generation towards modern society

In general, The problem of the younger generation towards modern society has two backward characteristics, namely individual desire and indifference or apathetic attitudes [6]. Soekanto added that the younger generation usually faces social and biological problems. When someone reaches adolescence, they are physically mature, but to be said to be mature in a social sense, other factors are still needed. He needs to learn a lot about the values and norms of his society [6].

Adolescence is said to be a dangerous period because during that period, a person leaves the childhood stage of life to move on to the next stage, namely the maturity stage. This period is felt as a crisis because there is no guidance yet, while his personality is still being formed. At that time he needed guidance, especially from his parents [6].

The feeling of wanting to be loved, accepted and appreciated is a natural desire that every child has. However, in reality, many young people like to sneer, ridicule and make mistakes towards their friends who are considered to be in a weaker position. As seen in the following quote.

Tapi teman-teman Han tidak ramah dan suka berkelahi. Sepedaku dilempari bola dan Han memarahinya. Teman Han mengejekku pengecut dan bodoh, aku diam saja [9].

Alga views Han as a good friend. This is different from Han's friends who often annoy Alga by throwing balls at him and also scolding him. The words said by Han's friends also felt hurtful and not nice to say. Degrading hate speech has become commonplace among the younger generation in this modern era.

One of the problems faced by the character Alga in the story *Hey, Alga* by Cikie Wahab is the tenuous friendship between Alga and Maria. This was caused by Maria tricking Alga with a new clock that Maria was proud of. Alga, who was amazed by the clock, thought that the clock really belonged to Maria. Then Alga tried to use it in front of Maria. Until news came that Genta's watch was missing.

To his surprise, Maria actually made him a scapegoat as a shield so that her classmates wouldn't find out that Maria was the one who took Genta's watch. This social reality often occurs among the younger generation in the modern era like today. A quote regarding the lie that Maria told Alga can be seen in the following quote.

Dengan berat hati aku mengambil jam tangan itu. Teman-teman sekelasku memandang dengan tidak suka. Aku semakin bersalah di mata mereka. Aku benar-benar tidak peduli. Aku hanya merasa kesal karena Maria telah berbohong padaku. [9].

e. The environmental issue of living,

What we usually think is something that encompasses human beings, both individually and in society. The living environment is usually divided into three categories: the physical environment, the biological environment, and the social environment. The physical environment is all the inanimate objects that surround humans. The biological environment is everything around humans in the form of living organisms. Meanwhile, the social environment consists of people—both individuals and groups—who are around humans [6].

A literary work is an essay that tells various problems in human life in its interactions with the environment and each other [11]. In this story, Alga describes the city he lives in as a city of gloom. Because the city gave him memories of sadness, misery, and emptiness. This can be seen in the following quote.

Aku menamai kota ini dengan kesuraman, tempat yang lekat dengan kesedihan dan kehampaan. Lihat saja apa yang dilakukan penduduk kota ini selain bertingkah aneh dan menjengkelkan. Satu satunya tempat yang paling waras adalah sekolah. Sekolah membuatku merasa tenang dan nyaman [9].

Alga has not been able to reconcile with the fact that he has to be separated from his parents. Algae still continues to adapt to its conditions which makes itself independent. Alga's social environment makes it difficult for Alga to enjoy life and be happy.

4. Conclusion

The social reality that happens in society is caused by the social problems that exist. The root causes of this social problem are family disorganization and unsupportive environmental conditions. A harmonious family can form a strong personality and become a problem solver. A supportive environment can be a positive solution to the problems facing society.

As a children's story, Cikie Wahab's work helps readers to be grateful for what they have, survive in all conditions, and never be discouraged. All problems will find answers. Don't give up on conditions, because the wheel of life will always turn. Maybe he will put us in the top position someday. Social problems and social realities are there to be faced. never run from reality no matter how bitter it is.

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