

Moral Values In Indonesian Literature: Revealing Courtesy In Three Ethnographic Novels

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to reveal the forms of courtesy that exist in three regions in Indonesia, namely Mentawai (West Sumatra), Jagoi Babang (West Kalimantan), and Java (East Java), represented in three Indonesian ethnographic novels. This current research applies the qualitative method. The research data sources are the novels entitled “Burung Kayu” (2020), “Kidung Rindu di Tapal Batas” (2015), and novel “Kumara Hikayat Sang Kekasih” (2017). The results reveal that the forms of courtesy represented in the three ethnographic novels are respecting for others, respecting for elders, respecting for the prevailing customs in society, etiquette in asking for help, and thanking someone.

Keywords : Ethnographic novels, manners, moral values

Introduction

Literary works and culture are interrelated. Culture is used by humans as a basis for living in social life, in order to become a dignified human being. according to [Didipu \(2013: 102\)](#), literary works are born not only to entertain but also to provide moral values to create humans with good character and manners. [Geertz \(1973: 145\)](#) explains that culture is an interpretation of human experience and is used as a benchmark for humans. Therefore, literary and cultural works can make humans have good moral values. Literary works are imaginative, aesthetic and can make the readers happy. In line with [Damono's opinion \(1984:1\)](#), literary works are created to be enjoyed, understood, and utilized in life. According to Hoarce (in [Wellek & Warren, 1990: 25](#)) literary works are beautiful and useful. The beauty contained in a literary work can entertain the readers through its writing, contents, language use, and storylines. Besides, through literary works, readers can gain knowledge and learn about moral values, including courtesy. Literary works contain certain values conveyed by the author to his readers. One of the values is moral values. [Kenny \(in Nurgiyanto 2013:429\)](#) states that the moral forms in literary works are commonly practical, i.e., can be easily grasped, interpreted, and implemented by readers.

Indonesia is a country known for its friendly and polite people. This does not only apply

to certain regions or tribes, but also to all ethnic groups in Indonesia. [Sibarani \(2012: 112\)](#) argues that the hospitality and courtesy emerged from previous ancestors which are until now widely practiced as a form of respect for them. One of the values of local culture reflected in literary works is courtesy. The form of literature that often contains the courtesy value is a novel. Through novels, readers can observe, explore, and recognize the cultural forms prevailing in certain societies, including the daily courtesy. [Didipu \(2018\)](#) also argues that although it is not legalized or written, courtesy can make people live side by side well. Courtesy comes from customs or culture that emerges from society to provide rules for individual and group societies. Usually these norms are local, contextual, and cultural.

Research on moral values and manners in ethnographic novels has been a focus in previous studies. [Didipu \(2018\)](#), for example, in his research, found that ethnographic novels contain many values of etiquette in the form of greeting people, speaking etiquette, and visiting. Besides, [Elma \(2021\)](#) suggests that the characters in ethnographic novels give a good message of morality, aqidah, and sharia. These three characteristics are a reflection of the culture of the Acehese people. In line with the two researchers, [Yantu \(2020\)](#) in his research reveals the moral values of the Bugis society contained in the Lontara novel which consists of eight moral values and nine local wisdom values.

These studies are different from the current study, namely in the object of research. This study discusses ethnographic novels related to the moral values contained in local courtesy. The novels studied in this study are ethnographic novels set in the Mentawai tribe (West Sumatra), the Jagoi Babang tribe (East Kalimantan), and the Javanese tribe (East Java).

To examine the courtesy in ethnographic novels, a literary anthropological approach can be used to analyze various forms of life that occur around the community in literary texts. [Ratna \(2011: 6\)](#) reveals that literary anthropology is one of the theories used to analyze ethnographic novels whose main purpose is to reveal various forms of phenomena that appear in society. According to [Markowski \(2012: 88\)](#) literature is a reflection of human behavior. Therefore reading literature is the same as seeing oneself. Norms or regulations are born in society as a basis for people to behave in a social environment ([Spradley, 2006: 134](#)). The novels “Burung Kayu: (BK), “Kidung Rindu at the Boundary” (KRdTB), and novels “Kumara Hikayat Sang Kekasih” (KHSK) are set in their respective regions, namely West Sumatra, West Kalimantan, and East Java. These three novels contain moral values in the form of courtesy carried out by the people of the area. The purpose of this research is to reveal the forms of courtesy that exist in three regions in Indonesia, namely Mentawai (West Sumatra), Jagoi Babang (West Kalimantan), and Java (East Java).

Courtesy is essential in everyday life. By being polite, individuals or groups can be appreciated and recognized for their existence in social life. Courtesy must also be applied wherever it is. For this reason, analyzing the ethnographic novel actually also reviews the courtesy values in society

Method

This qualitative research seeks, understands, and finds the meaning of natural social phenomena in three ethnographic novels. Specific data from informants and observations were analyzed inductively from the specific themes to general themes, focusing on individual meanings ([Creswell, 2015: 4](#)). The data sources are three ethnographic novels: (1) Burung Kayu (Wooden Birds) by [Niparas Erlang \(2020\)](#), (2) Kidung Rindu di Tapal Batas (A Song of Longing at the Boundary) by [Aguk Irawa MN \(2015\)](#), and (3) Kumara Hikayat Sang Kekasih

(Kumara the Lover's Story) by S. Jai (2017). The three novels were chosen because they represent the three largest regions in Indonesia, namely Sumatra, Kalimantan, and Java. And the novel is an ethnographic novel that is able to tell the activities of daily life that can cause people's behavior. The behavior that can be taken from the narrative in the novel is in the form of politeness, including: respect, obeying the rules, helping, apologizing. There are 20 data citations on the three data sources containing the thought formation and actions of the selected characters as data.

The research data are in the form of words, phrases, sentences that are related to the form of courtesy in ethnographic novels. Data collection techniques applied library techniques by reading the three novels intensively, filtering and selecting data, and providing codes. The collected data were then analyzed through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 12).

Results and Discussion

Humans are social creatures who need social interaction (i.e., communicating one another). In such kind of interaction, humans certainly need norms or rules, including the norm of courtesy. Based on the data analysis, it is revealed that there are several forms of courtesy found in the three novels, representing the courtesy that apply to Mentawai tribe in West Sumatra, Jagoi Babang tribe in West Kalimantan, and Javanese tribe in East Java.

Respect

In Mentawai tradition, pig slaughter is a tradition that has been passed down from generation to generation. The slaughter of pigs is commonly done as a form of respect for elders or other respected people. The party who sacrifices the pig will give the pork to his trusted person as a form of respect. This can be seen in the following quote.

Baumani menyembelih seekor babi sebagai wujud niat baik. Ia memberikan daging kepada Simasapsap.

Baumani slaughtered a pig as a form of goodwill. He gave the meat to Simasapsap. (Erlang, 2020: 36).

As a sense of respect and to show trust in Simasapsap, Baumani slaughtered a pig. In Mentawai tribe, the slaughter of pigs is carried out not only for the payment ceremony but also for the welcoming ceremony. This tradition is still being practiced today.

In Mentawai tradition, courtesy of respect is not only related to parents or elders but also to the death ceremony, as can be seen in the following quote:

“Setelah usai segala ritual, setelah eeruk yang menandai akhir masa berduka dan keluarga uma suaminya yang boleh memakai lagi berbagai warna ceria, Bai Legeumani mesti bersikapp untuk kembali ke uma orang tuanya.”

"After all the rituals are over, after the eeruk which marks the end of the mourning period, the family of her husband's uma can wear various cheerful colors again, Bai Legeumani must act to return to her parents' uma." (Erlang, 2020: 67)

The data explains that as a form of respect for the bereaved family, guests or relatives are not allowed to wear brightly colored clothes. However, after the ritual process is finished,

they are allowed to wear brightly colored ones that signify joy, so as not to get hung up on sadness. In Mentawai, when someone dies, a death ceremony ritual (eeruk) is usually held for several days. During the ceremony, the family holds a mourning ritual and the guesses and relatives are not allowed to wear bright colored clothes. As a form of respect and to create a comfortable atmosphere, guests and relatives should obey the norms.

A form of politeness and respect for parents also appeared in the following data:

“tak berniat kembali ke uma orang tua dan saudara-saudara lelakinya. Ia akan bertahan di uma keluarga mendiang suaminya.”(Erlang, 2020: 68)

“having no intention of returning to her parents and brothers. She will stay in the uma of her late husband.” (Erlang, 2020: 68).

The quote explains that a wife never leaves her late husband`s house even to stay in her parents' house. For her, the husband's place is her home and as a form of devotion to her husband even though he has died. It is an attitude of always respecting and obeying a late husband and his family, because only in that way, she can respect and obey her late husband. Apart from being a form of respect and courtesy, it has indeed been a Mentawai tradition that a wife still has the right to stay and enjoy the results of her husband's hard work and can use it to raise her children.

The courtesy for others as a sense of respect can also be seen in the following data.

“Maka, untuk mempererat tali pertemanan, mereka kerap berkumpul di sapou, yaitu tempat kepala dusun yang layak dihormati.”

"So, to strengthen the ties of friendship, they often gather in sapou, the place of the honorable head of the hamlet." (Erlang, 2020: 72).

The data revealed that to strengthen a friendship, as well as a form of respect for the hamlet head, a meeting was held at the village head`s house. This is to strengthen the relationship of each other.

When walking, the younger person should be behind the older one, which is a form courtesy to the older ones. This attitude is not only found in Javanese society but also in the Jagoi Babang, precisely in West Kalimantan, as can be seen in the following quote:

“Kaum yang lebih tua. Laki-laki, dan perempuan, berjalan di antara orang-orang yang menabuh alat-alat musik.”

“Older people. Men, and women, walk among those who play musical instruments.” (MN, 2015: 4-5).

The quote suggests that when walking the older one should walk in front. Behind the older people were men, then women. This is because men are to lead women, so that men should be in front.

“... Kami sangat menghormatinya, walau sebageian dari kami mulai merasa tidak puas terhadapnya. “

“... We have great respect for him, although some of us are starting to feel dissatisfied

with him. "(MN, 2015: 7).

In Jagoi Bajang community, although someone does not agree with the attitude of his/her parents, he/she who is younger must respect the elders as a form of politeness towards the leader.

"Sampai kapan kita akan di sini?" Mamut menjawab menoleh ke arahnya, dan menjawab, "Sampai pesta usai...."

"How long will we be here?" Mamut turned to him and replied, "Until the party is over...." (MN, 2015: 8).

In Javanese society there is also an attitude of respect as found in the following quote from the novel: "As a form of respect between tribes, many Malays and Javanese people attend ceremonies like this." (Jai, 2017: 22) the quote explains that attending the ceremony signifies respect for inter-tribes. Even though they come from different tribes, the Javanese still respect the customs of other tribes.

Humans as social beings who need other people in their lives, of course, are required to have a friendly attitude under any circumstances and when communicating with other people, whether they have kinship ties or not. In a relevant previous study, Leha (2017) in her research related to religious studies on Madihinn, revealed that a friendly person will of course always have many friends, be loved, and easy to do all activities. Respect for others is a reflection of oneself in understanding and applying ethical and moral values. How a person and to whom respect is given, becomes the standard of moral judgment of the person concerned.

According to Lickona (2013) respect means showing our appreciation for the dignity of others or things other than ourselves. There are three main things, namely respect for oneself, respect for others and respect for all forms of life and the environment that take care of each other.

Obeying The Rules

By complying with applicable regulations which are from the norms of manners carried out by the community. When obeying the rules means one wants safety. This can also be seen in the following quote. The people shouted in unison, "Ready, Villager!" without stopping the transportation business." (Erlang, 2020: 84)

Obeying the applicable regulations is part of the norms of courtesy in society. When obeying the rules, it means someone wants safety.

"Aturan adalah aturan, dan ia tidak mau terjadi hal yang buruk dan mengerikan. Karena itu, ia berkata kepada semua orang, "Hormatilah tapal batas" Bila sedikit saja kalian melanggar batas itu, mereka menembak kalian!"

"Rules are rules, and he doesn't want bad and terrible things to happen. Therefore, he said to everyone, "Respect the boundaries." If you cross the line even a little, they shoot you!" (MN, 2015: 31).

The novel (KRdTB) tells about the border areas in West Kalimantan and Sarawak. The quote explains that rules must be followed in order to be safe. Because if someone violates, he can be shot by the guards at the border. By obeying the rules, it is the same as creating safety for oneself and the group. In addition to complying with the regulations, it also means obeying

the norms that have been determined by the people at the border.

Respect can arise at any time, not only to the rule maker but also to those who are older. In the novel (KHsK) it is described that the Javanese people, both in Central Java and East Java, have a culture of respecting elders.

“Ya, selama da Pak Karno ya, para pemburu alap-alap sumber nyawa itu ya sungkanlah.”

“Yes, as long as Pak Karno is around, the hunters of 'alap-alap sumber nyawa' feel uncomfortable. (Jai, 2017: 162).

From the quote, it can be seen that Pak Karno is an elder in the area. When someone wants to hunt an ala-alap, he will reconsider it because he respects Pak Karno. In Javanese culture, there is still a feeling of reluctance towards older people. By respecting elders, it is hoped that there will be harmony in the area. Respect is a manifestation of moral values that determine good behavior, including courtesy towards parents.

Each region or place has its own policies or rules. A leader when he wants to visit or travel also needs a permit, as part of the operational procedure, but usually there are special privileges for the leader

“Hanya satu dua saja yang dijemput, karena dia pimpinannya. Dan dijemput di dalam pabrik berarti dengan izin...”

“Only one or two are picked up, because he is the leader. And picked up in the factory which means with permission...” (Jai, 2017: 163)

The quote explains the importance of complying with regulations according to the procedure, even though the person invited is a leader. By implementing norms or rules, it is expected to create a safe and calm atmosphere. Obeying the rules is the same as being aware of the norms that apply in the place. Obedience is part of good manners in society for the purpose of creating peace in work and socializing.

In Java, norms and rules are upheld, including by the army, as shown in the following data.

”Tentara minta agar taka ada lagi penculikan, pembunuhan. Penangkapan masih boleh terjadi, asalkan diserahkan kepada yang berwajib.”

”The army asks that there be no more kidnappings, killings. Arrests are still allowed, as long as they are handed over to the authorities.” (Jai, 2017: 186).

From these data it can be seen that the army still has tolerance and cooperation with the community. This shows that security is a shared responsibility. What is important is that this cooperation can lead to harmony, prosperity, and peace in society .

As social beings, humans need each other in social life. The community environment is a place to develop humans themselves in cooperating, socializing, and earning a living to meet their needs. However, due to differences in the interests and desires of one person with another, conflicts often occur which cause conflicts in society. This can lead to a social environment that is not harmonious, disorderly, not peaceful, and insecure. Therefore, to

prevent these negative things from happening, regulations are needed, aiming for order, peace, tranquility, and justice to be realized in the association between people. Agree with Zang, et al (2021) regarding regulations in society need to be done in order to create a conducive, safe, and peaceful atmosphere. Likewise in other matters, regulations are designed to make it easier for humans to act.

Helpful Attitude

Helping is a very noble attitude, especially in social life. This is part of a reflection of polite attitude towards the surrounding community. Help is very diverse, can help in the form of services or goods. As in the following quote: "Seeing the chaos, the sub-district government tried to mediate between the tribes who were fighting with the Social Service." (Erlang, 2020: 91) The quote explains that as a form of concern for the people who are in conflict, the government helps mediate so that the dispute can be resolved. This helpful attitude is also a manifestation of the leadership's responsibility to the people in order to create a harmonious and peaceful atmosphere. A quote on another helpful attitude is also found in the quote: "They are not involved in prayers and worship, but their energy is involved to help smooth the ceremony." (Jai, 2017: 22) the quote explains that the community has implemented a polite attitude related to the attitude of helping, by helping the energy they use is beneficial for the smoothness of the ceremony at the activity. This is a form of togetherness that makes a noble value in society.

In Javanese tradition, someone who has been helped usually will never forget the kindness of the person who has helped him, as in the following data:

"Makanya mereka berhutang nyawa pada Pak Karta."

"That's why they owe their life to Pak Karta." (Jai, 2017: 174).

The data explains that Pak Karta has helped them so that they owe their lives to him. Gratitude is part of the norm of politeness because it can create harmony among others and as a form of appreciation for the help.

Other forms of courtesy in society can also be found when people do a community voluntary work (in Indonesia it is known as gotong royong). Gotong royong is mutual cooperation in the form helping someone who will have an event in his home. Gotong royong can strengthen friendship, harmony, and peaceas in the following data.

"Jangan cuma berdiam diri di pos. Ayo ikut bersama yang lain gropyok."

"Don't just stay in the post. Let's go with the others, gropyok." (Jai, 2017: 185).

The data explains that one should not remain silent but should take part in collaborating with others. In Javanese community, if someone does not participate in gotong royong, they will be subject to social sanctions, it can be in the form of gossip or retaliation, i.e., not coming/helping when he has a need. Through gotong royong, unity and brotherhood in the surrounding environment can be created. Participating in community service events is a form of courtesy because community service is important in social life, especially in Java.

Humans are social creatures who need each other. We never know when we will experience difficulties or others will experience them. But, surely everyone will go through a difficult road, so they need help or help from others. Everyone will be faced with problems that

they cannot face alone without involving other people to help them. Therefore, we must live to help and help each other. By working together, helping others, is an effort to form harmony in society. Agree with the relevant research [Kurniawan \(2019\)](#) regarding the value of gotong royong needs to be preserved because it has a positive impact. In society, the value of gotong royong is very common, such as: celebrations or parties, for example if there is a circumcision or wedding celebration, then not only family members or relatives help, but neighbors also help. In the event of a death, accident or illness, the neighbors around the neighborhood or village will help, either the shroud, labor and others in order to relieve the victim's family. Then in household chores, building a house or making a well, the neighbors will help in terms of energy or other things. In addition to agriculture, that is, with the help of the labor given at the time of clearing the land, working the land and also harvesting, then it will be returned in the same way as the assistance received. This forms an agricultural system that clearly has a mutual cooperation pattern based on a reciprocal system. Then work that is useful for the public interest, such as repairing bridges, repairing roads and so on.

The attitude of helping or mutual cooperation arises on the basis of awareness and enthusiasm that prioritizes common interests or the environment and not interests.personal.

Requests (stuff, sorry, and please)

In addition to the politeness expressed, there is also a person's attitude towards requesting goods, apologizing, or asking for help. In social life very often ask for help from other people. Because humans are social creatures who need each other. Like the quote in the following novel: "The cross-eyed man said, again asking for tobacco after gulping down his coconut water Sengrekerei then took out his thinning supply of tobacco and started to distribute it." ([Erlang, 2020: 81](#)) in the data quote explains that when If you want to ask for something, you have to get permission first. By asking is a form of courtesy that is not by stealing but with prior permission, so that someone who has the item will give it even though the item is still small. This right proves that asking is more valued than stealing or looting.

Not only by asking for something, but by apologizing people will also melt. In the Jagoi Babang tribe, at every event, someone must not go home before the event is finished. It is considered disrespectful if someone leaves earlier. As a form of appreciation and respect, it is appropriate to follow the event process until it is finished and be solemn in following the process.

In addition to respect, courtesy also comes from knowing how to behave. When we make a mistake, we must apologize, as in

"Maafkan saya, Ki"ucap Iskandar segera, seperti menyesali dengan apa yang diucapkan,"Maafkan saya..."

"I'm sorry, Ki," said Iskandar immediately, as if he regretted what he said, "I'm sorry ..." ([MN, 2015:3](#)).

To avoid misunderstanding, it is better to apologize immediately when someone makes mistake or behaves badly. Even if it is not accepted, at least he has apologized. By apologizing, it means that he has a sense of responsibility for his actions, and cares about other people. Apologizing is a form of courtesy in society. By apologizing, it means that someone feels that what was done was a mistake, and the person being apologized becomes more appreciated.

Not only the word maaf (sorry) but also tolong (please) should be used to show a courtesy towards others, as in the following quote,
“Tolong, izinkan mereka untuk menyumbangkan puisi...”
“Please, allow them to contribute poetry...”(NM, 2015: 14)

The word 'please' is really needed even if it comes from someone who is older or more powerful. By saying 'please' people who are asked for help will feel respected and appreciated because they feel needed. Asking for help means communicating with other people that creates a sense of trust in that person.

Man Karso also showed the attitude of asking when he asked to send Tukinem and his children home. “Tukinem, come on, you and the children should go home. I'll help you raise your children later.” (Jai, 2017: 45) The quote proves the request to go home, not just telling him to go home, but Man Karso will help raise his child. In Javanese society, every action they take requires real evidence. Like not only ordering but also giving rewards.

The data that has been found to have differences from previous research, namely in this paper discusses ethnographic novels that discuss moral values in manners. There has been no previous research that has discussed manners. One of them has talked about etiquette, but no one has discussed manners. As well as other novels. Even though it is the same ethnographic novel, the data used is different. The data that the researcher uses are ethnographic novels set in Mentawai in West Sumatra, Jagoi Babang in East Kalimantan, and East Java.

Every human being must have made mistakes. The word "Sorry" is a word that is often said when someone realizes he is guilty. Apologizing is a form of sympathy as well as regret. Not only that, apologizing is also a form of respect for others. Asking for help will not make your self-esteem drop or look weak. Every human being is a social being who definitely needs the help of others. After receiving help or receiving something, it's best to always be grateful. Gratitude is a form of respect for others. Agree with Desiani, et al (2020) someone who has done something wrong should apologize to admit his mistake and show the person's humility for the mistake he made, when asking for help he should say the word help when he needs something. Apologizing, asking for help is a magic word as well as a form of courtesy to others.

Discussing moral values that occur in society is certainly very broad. Because morals in society are certainly determined by the customs, norms, and culture adopted, while each region has its own uniqueness and customs. However, in these three ethnographic novels, the researchers found similarities created by the three ethnographic novels, even though the novels have different backgrounds, namely from Mentawai in West Sumatra, Jagoi Babang in West Kalimantan, and East Java. There are many similarities that he found, namely still having a polite attitude in the story in the form of respect, thanks, and words of help.

Conclusion

In this study it can be concluded that the three novels have similarities related to the manners found. The manners found in the three novels are about respect for others, respect for elders, respect for leaders, and respect for the customs and traditions prevailing in society. In addition, the form of courtesy can also be found when people ask for help and say thank you. Comply with applicable regulations, helpful attitude to others. In addition, the form of courtesy can also be found when people apologize, and ask for help.

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