Raising Water and River Sustainability Issues: An Effort to Preserve the Nature through Children’s Stories

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Abstract: Indonesian have many various tradition ways to preserve and protect the nature around them. One of the ways is by telling stories which brings a message of nature sustainability. Ancestors passed the message, moral lesson and the issues of the environment through generations from time to time through a tradition of oral story. Giving moral lessons in environmental issues in the past was usually done by telling fairy tales of particular objects, i.e., of water and rivers due to its essential to human life sustainability. Therefore, this study aimed to reveal the important role and function of water and rivers that are passed using fairy tales to preserve the natural environment around humans. The exploration and analysis at first glance from this present study found that the fairy tales are very simple for them however it contains a lot of, messages, moral lessons and issues of environmental sustainability. It served as a carrier of a moral message to maintain, conserve and preserve the natural environment in which they live. This result of this study also showed that teachings about moral and messages of environmental issues had been known for a long time in Javanese tradition.

Keywords: water, fairy tales, meaning, environment, river.

1. Introduction

Literary work is a part of people's lives. Literary work lives very close to the people. Through literary works, people's lives can be traced. Literary works known in society can take the form of oral or written literature. In the past, many literary works were delivered orally. Therefore the term oral literature was known. But in oral literature, there is an abundance of folklore that is recognized by the people. These stories mix between legends, myths, and beliefs of the local people. So, literary work is indeed a cultural wealth of the people. As times progressed, after people began to know writing, people started to write stories, legends, and myths which they knew in written form. With the writing of stories, legends, and myths, people have been able to document all the cultural results they have [3]. This means the people are familiar with the written literature. By having written literature, they begin to think about preserving the existing traditions among them.

Among the many traditions they preserve is telling stories related to their daily lives. Daily life is a problem that often adorns the people’s literature. Usually contains themes, relationships between people, relationships between families, and the relationship between humans and their environment. This big theme often inspires the literary artists to write and create literary works. The literary works, i.e., poet, it raises the issue of everyday life, with the idea that seems simple but has a lot of moral messages.
Moreover, in this big theme, smaller issues are made as well, such as honesty, justice, truth, love, struggle, reality, loyalty, honor, self-esteem, etc. By taking a smaller theme such as these, the big theme can be an umbrella for some smaller theme. This way it can be easier to insert the moral message that wanted to be delivered. The habit of conveying moral messages through stories goes on until today. This condition occurs because the entire community life system is already in an elemental unit that supports the building of the culture of humanity as a whole [9].

Humans are fundamentally beings who experience change from time to time. That change is what causes a balance interacting with other community members. Perhaps the problems faced stay the same, but the ways to deal with and solve the problems are exceptionally adapted to time. For example, if you listen to stories meant for children, people always say that the stories came from the past. This idea or suggestion may be true in the past, but the way to tell the stories certainly cannot be done in the old way, and that is the dynamics of life. Change does not only occur at one time or one thing, but changes in life can happen in all parts although slowly or even indirectly. Every ethnic group has its character so that in response to change they are not the same as other ethnic groups [12].

Furthermore, a number of researchers stated that different characteristics of language in each ethnic group also results in a phenomenon of different results of research. Through this difference, the other side of the richness of cultural nuances of the fairy tales can be seen. At the same time, it also illustrates the diversity of people's culture, the way the community thinks and more importantly is how people raise essential life issues through the fairy tales. The main objective of this research is to raise the importance of the role and function of water and rivers, which are delivered through fairy tales to preserve the natural environment indeed find the issues contained in a fairy tale is not easy. Searching for the past lives from the community is the main thing that must be considered. Every community has its way of delivering a story, but what is not less important is to understand how people insert a theme, message, and meaning through a story.

2. The Review: Approaches

Before conducting further research, it must be prepared in advance that the discussion of water and river is carried out through two approaches, namely cultural approach, and literary approach. In general, a cultural approach is an approach to several community activities carried out in a particular routine. This means that observations are made on activities that lead to the daily activities of the community in fulfilling the needs of their entire lives.

Culture is the overall physical and non-physical activities of the community, in everyday life, while at the same time realizing its creativity both in physical as well as non-physical forms and simultaneously becoming a distinctive feature from other communities [8]. Aside from that, culture is also an awareness of the noble values that are realized in the form of appreciation of the values, norms, and rules that apply in the community.

![Diagram of Approaches](image)

**Figure 1.** Approaches to explore themes and messages from a fairy tale.
Culture is also an embodiment of human creation, taste, and work in living their daily lives. One of the many elements of culture is art. Art is part of human life. Of the many branches of art, there is one that is related to the activities of human life namely literary art. Literary art, initially understood as an activity solely to tell stories such as fairy tales and such, but in its development literary art is an important part of people's lives. A nation considered to have noble values can be seen by analyzing their literary works and understanding what is being conveyed through these works. To understand these two approaches, there must be one bridge that can be used to understand both. The qualitative research method is a research procedure that produces some descriptive data, both written and oral, from a number of people observed along with their behavior [10][16].

In addition, other opinions stated that qualitative research is a study where the setting of the place and time is the main basis, researchers become data collection instruments. After that data is analyzed inductively or deductively (referreing on data processing interests), to explain the process that is examined expressively and achieve the results expected in the temporary hypothesis. For things related to fairy tales or old stories related to environmental issues, this research will use a case study research method, with a qualitative approach. As explained earlier, this research is qualitative research, which will raise environmental issues. This condition can be made possible by using a pragmatism perspective, in which researchers can focus on the problem to be solved [1].

3. Research Method

Furthermore, in the approach to a literary work, all information obtained from both inside and outside the work is considered as data. Data obtained from tracing the text content of the story is analyzed and interpreted by holding on to the signs of the theory of story structure analysis [6]. After analyzing and capturing the structure of the story, proceed with a search of the themes and messages expressed or implied in the story. There are also traces of certain themes and messages that are often tucked into the story. It is important to obtain a complete understanding of the whole story structure in fairy tales [13]. After that through these stages, the meaning of the tale is also traced, which in turn will get a new understanding of the fairy tale.

Along with getting this new understanding, it is hoped that the environmental issues can be found in the fairy tale. Tracing through the meaning of the issue of preservation of the natural environment through fairy tales or children's stories is expected to bring new horizons to understanding a message and meaning about the natural environment. The issue of the natural environment is important because the series of events in the story experienced by story characters refers to a certain point [14][17][18]..

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Natural Environment for Life

The environment is a major part of life. Management of water, fire, soil, plants, and animals, as well as air or wind, follows certain rules, values, and norms that apply in the community. In reality, traditional communities are very well aware of the linkages between these five elements. A land is a place that is needed by humans. Right soil conditions are soil that can support water, fire, plants, and animals. Water and fire are basic needs. Fire is needed to cook food and fight darkness, while water is required to cleanse the body, prepare food and control fire. By maintaining the balance of water, fire, soil, plants, animals, the community can fulfill their needs.

Furthermore, air or wind is the most essential part of life. Air or wind, for traditional societies, is a power of authority that must be respected because it cannot be seen, and can only be felt. That is why it is considered a power of authority. This air or wind must be respected so as not to bring disaster. Respect is usually done through cultural rituals [5][16][17][18].
Traditional communities believe that the nature around the human environment has its rhythm. Water has the breath of life through the path determined by God. Water can be very beneficial for humans if humans respect the course of water, however, if humans damage the water's course humans will receive disasters with excessive water such as floods. That is why the breath of water, which has a determined path, is called the river. It is called a determined path because water flows according to the conditions of the land or ground it passes through. The river always flows from the mountains to lower places as determined by God [11]. Rivers, where water flows on this earth, are the necessity of life for humans. Rivers where water runs can be said to be the sources of life.

In understanding this story, it is important to remember that language is the most important element because language is a means of communication between community members in their daily activities. Through language, various kinds of things can be conveyed [4]. In this case, the vocabulary related to this research must first be understood. The focus of attention is on water and rivers. Water in Javanese is called *banyu, toya, warih, we, tirta*. These are five water vocabularies in Javanese that are known by the community. These five words can be found in everyday life. River in Javanese is called *kali, bengawan, lèpén*. This water and rivers often appear in many fairy tales, perhaps because these two natural elements are vitally needed in human life. To convey the message that the river is important, traditional communities deliver messages to the next generation through various means.

4.2. Character in Story

The folklore associated with water and the river is abundant. But in the interest of this research, the Javanese folklore that will be used is very well known, namely the story of *Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih*. In this story, there are two characters, namely good character and bad character. Both of these characters play their respective functions and roles. In this story, individuals with good character are always victims of bad/black characters. In the course of the story, good characters go through a number of places and objects which later become a reference for understanding the theme and what message that wanted to be delivered from this story. Thus, one of them is through stories. In all regions of this archipelago, stories with good and evil characters associated with the river are not abundant, and there are only certain stories. One of them is a fairy tale or children’s story of *Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih*.

This fairy tale tells the story of the life of a girl that lives with a family. The mother has two daughters who are equally beautiful; one is named Bawang Merah because her cheeks are always red, and one is named Bawang Putih, because her face is still pale, due to being too exhausted from work. These two children were treated differently from their mother. Bawang Merah is spoiled, and Bawang Putih must work hard to take care of the household. One of the many jobs Bawang Putih has to do is to go to the river to get water and wash clothes. One day one of the many clothes she washed is gone, and there are some missing. Upon returning to the house, Bawang Putih was scolded by her mother and was ordered to look for the clothes until they could be found. Bawang Putih runs along the river bank. During the trip, Bawang Putih met with seven people who were working on the river, and by the river, they were:

1) Washing clothes,
2) Grooming horses,
3) Washing buffaloes,
4) Cleaning cows,
5) Herding goats by the river bank,
6) Herding ducks by the river bank,
7) Washing gadhung tubers or taro roots.
Bawang Putih asked the seven people one by one, “Have you seen clothes carried by the river?” and one by one, the seven people answered that they have not seen. They suggested Bawang Putih ask an old grandmother who was at the corner of the river. Bawang Putih thanked and approached the old woman who was washing rice to get her clothes. The old grandmother not only gave the garments back to Bawang Putih, but the old grandmother asked Bawang Putih to return to the old grandmother the next day. Bawang Putih again met the old grandmother after finishing washing clothes in the river. The old grandmother then invited Bawang Putih to leave the village. The old grandmother brought Bawang Putih to her palace. Thus, the life of Bawang Putih changed.

4.3. Themes and Messages in Fairy Tales

Following the storyline of a fairy tale is not too difficult, but understanding why the events in the story are such as that is very difficult. A story usually has a storyline consisting of a series of events [2]. In one event there are characters, problems, and settings. The series of events are related to one another, then forms the existence of one part of the story. This part of the story then supports the story's theme. Each part of the story usually has one message that wanted to be delivered. Each part of the story always has themes and messages that seem interrelated with each other.

From the description of jobs of people that Bawang Putih met, both by the river and in the middle of the river it is very visible that river water is used for daily living purposes especially washing clothes and washing gadhung tubers or taro, cleaning or bathing animals, and herding livestock namely ducks and goats. With these conditions, it is clear that rivers have an essential function for the community. River water is the foundation of society for everyday life. Washing clothes and washing tubers such as gadhung, taro and other in the river, are the daily habits of traditional people. Not to mention cleaning or bathing the animals such as buffaloes, cows, horses are healthy. Activities such as herding livestock on the banks of the river are also common, given that various kinds of fruit trees can be found on the banks of the river. The theme of this story is twofold, namely the theme related to the life story of the story’s characters and themes related to the activities around the environment where the main character of the story lives. The theme becomes the main part of the story. Messages that can be captured from stories with such themes are in everyday life water and rivers become very important and are one unity of needs related to each other. People really need water and rivers to fulfill all their daily needs. Therefore, it is necessary to maintain the presence of water and rivers. Water and rivers are a source of life for people.

4.4. The Meaning of Water and River in Life

Reinterpreting a story which was adapted to its era is not easy. The story is structured not without purpose. Traditional communities arrange stories to provide lessons for the younger generation. That is why the story not only functions as entertainment but also serves as a means for education. Inside each story are a message and meaning. This meaning is often hidden in stories. One example would be the meaning of the story of Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih. On the outer skin of the story, it appears as a sad story because of the unfortunate fate that befell the story’s characters. But is the reader aware, that there is something else that wanted to be conveyed through the story?

That something is water and river or water in rivers. Water and rivers play an important role in human life. Water is the main element in human life. Water is also a major human need. Water is a major part in human life. How important water is.

For this reason, humans must preserve the presence of water. In this world, God places 98% of water in the sea with salty taste. Water that can be used to meet the needs of human life is not less than 2%. In this 2% water is spread in lakes, rivers, seas, swamps, underground or wells and so on. Given this condition, it is important to realize that fresh water is essential in its existence to meet the needs of human life [15].
Traditional communities pay particular attention to the presence of water. Water is so important in human life which people even gave a special term for water. A simple example is the use of terms of the names of places, people, and objects that are considered valuable. Names of places such as Banyumas, Banyuwangi, Banyuurip. Names of people such as Banyubiru, Banyurana, Andanawarih, etc. Names associated with objects’ conditions such as toya, wédhang, tirta amerta, etc. However, in the present day, these particular words have no meaning anymore. Everything is just naming, the meaning behind the designation must be traced through an understanding of the culture of the community. It is often found that understanding the habits of this society changes with the progress of time. That is why the meaning of a story from one age is very dependent on the researcher who can obtain a new understanding. Along with the changing times, a phenomenon in society will be captured with a different perspective.

Differences occur in addition to different ways people think, also because of different viewpoint situations [7].

The meaning of water in life, apart from being realized as mentioned above, also places water about the community's religion. In the past, people placed water as a valuable object, especially for purification before religious rituals. This can be seen in most Hindu and Buddhist temples in Central Java and East Java which sacralize water as part of the rituals. In the next period, almost all religions and spirituals involve water as part of their ritual activities.

5. Conclusion

Water and Rivers are part of people’s lives. To convey this to the next generation, the community delivers it through fairy tales or stories. Thus fairy tales and stories also became an important part of human life. The result of human life is usually called with cultural terms. Through fairy tales that seemed simple, our ancestors wanted to convey that life lasts from generation to generation. Human life is on earth. Therefore the balance of nature must be maintained. In everyday life on earth, the most important thing that must be available is fresh water. With clean, fresh water, the people can live their lives. Some places to acquire fresh water are lakes and rivers. The river covers hundreds of kilometers to bring water for the benefit of human life. Therefore, water and river life must be preserved. The people must be wise in utilizing river water. Through these fairy tales rivers that are heavily polluted or destroyed is depicted with a comparison of the stories' characters that, in the course of their lives, experienced many difficulties. If you wish for a good life, then natural elements such as water and rivers must be appreciated. The meaning of water and rivers is essential about human life with its natural environment.

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