

# Sufistic Semiotics

## *The Analysis Method of Sufistic Poetry*

Ma'mur Saadie, Syihabuddin Syihabuddin and Sumiyadi Sumiyadi

Department of Indonesia Language Education and Literature, Faculty of Language Education and Literature, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia  
mamursaadie@gmail.com

Keywords: Sufistic Poetry, Sufistic Semiotics, Symbol Tracing, Structural Analysis, Retreat Politeness.

Abstract: *Sufistic* poetry is included into specialized poetry genre. Therefore, its analysis ought to use particular analysis method. The present article proposes the analysis by *sufistic* poetry method. This method is realized in form of analysis stages which is modified from semiotic method developed by Riffaterre (1998). The analysis is conducted in three stages, namely: symbol tracing, structural analysis, and *sufistic* element analysis. At the first stage, the analysis was applied to two sides: symbol quality and originality. At the second stage, the analysis was applied to 8 sides: imaginary, figure of speech, rhyme, rhythm, typography, theme, tone, and unity. At the third stage, the analysis is applied to three sides: retreat politeness, *sufi maqam* attainment, and the level of *sufism* in which its analysis bases refers to classic book *sufi* concept.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

A roman scholar, Horatius, in his book *Ars Poetica* mentions the term *dulce et utile*, which means literature has double benefit, entertaining and beneficial for its readers (Budiman, 2001). The first function is realized by aesthetic elements and the second function is by wisdom elements. In literary works, especially poetry, those elements (*dulce et utile*) should be attractive. Therefore, Abd al-Karim al-Jili mentions those elements as outer beauty (*jamal*) and inner beauty (*husn*). For Melayu writers, those two concepts are well known as *indah* (beautiful) and *elok* (attractive) (Braginsky, 1994). Pradopo (2002) argues that those two elements are called aesthetic and extra-aesthetic elements. In relation with this, it can be said that good poetry should provide its readers with beauty (*al jamal*) and wisdom (*al husn*) elements in the way which calming down souls.

Actually, the element of entertaining (*dulce*) psychologically has low values seen from the element of benefit, except when it is related to high values (Rustom, 2005). In *sufistic* poetry, the entertaining element is connected with high benefit. Therefore, *sufistic* poetry place a high position in the list of benefit and soul contentedness (Viitamäki, 2015).

## 2 RESEARCH METHODS

Poetry is a text containing ungrammaticality seen from linguistics use, but they are grammatical once connected with literature code (Riffaterre, 1998). This requires two analysis stage, namely heuristic and hermeneutic.

### 2.1 Heuristic Analysis

The most popular statement from Riffaterre (1998) about poetry is that "a poem says one thing and means another". However, poetry still involve language elements similar to daily language. Therefore, the poetry analysis should be initiated by symbol tracing of conventional language in mimesis level.

In the heuristic analysis, analysts find poetry meaning in the relation with mimesis world. In the analysis, the researchers find unmatched language in the poetry with daily language use. Riffaterre (1998) calls it ungrammaticality. Ungrammaticality in poetry is caused by three things: displacing, creating, and distorting of daily language. Therefore, in the level of mimesis relation, the analysts find referential fallacy.

In this *sufistic* semiotics, the stage is modified to be symbol tracing which analyses two things: symbol quality and originality.

## 2.2 Hermeneutic Analysis

In this stage, with all stylistics power, poetry is revealed as deep as possible so that the power of analysis methods is uncovered: meaning nuance, sound, imaginary, figure of speech, rhyme, rhythm, and typography of the read poetry. At this stage, analysers can find the meaning of poetry represented in the words and phrases. In this stage, readers can reveal poetry significance represented in the whole text. Therefore, at this stage, the relation among poetry elements should be described well. Thus, it is expected that the analysis can totally reveal the aesthetic and wisdom elements of poetry in which the two elements should walk in harmony.

In this *sufistic* semiotics, the stage is modified as structural analysis which focuses on: imaginary, figure of speech, rhyme, rhythm, theme, tone, and unity. Then all of them are investigated in relation with diction and typography.

## 2.3 Inter-textual Relation Tracing (Sufism Element Analysis)

In relation with intertextuality concept, a number of scholars are involved in a long debatable discussion. As the analysis reference of the article, the writers directly refer to the culture book concept (Al Ghazali). To analyse *sufistic* poetry, the culture book is narrowed into classic *sufi* book containing *sufism* concept.

The analysis of *sufism* elements are applied towards three things: expression politeness, *sufistic* maqam attainment and the level of *sufism* behaviour. *Sufistic* maqam attainment is analysed in a reference to *maqamat al-Yaqin* concept, while the level of *sufistic* behavior is analysed by three concepts of soul attendance in *sufism* behaviour, namely *al-Uns*, *sakr* and *fana*.

The concept of *maqāmāt al-Yaqīn* consists of 9 paths to pass: *taubat*, *syukur*, *sabar*, *raja'*, *khauf*, *zuhud*, *tawakal*, *rido*, and *mahabbah* as proposed by Abu Thalib Al-Makky. To complete the discussion, the opinion from Al-Ghazali and al-Qusyairi are also presented.

*Taubat* (repentance) means regretting to do sins by promising wholeheartedly not to do them any longer and be back to the right path blessed by Allah 'Azza wajalla.

*Sabar* (being patient) covers 5 things: (1) being patient to control the soul of a servant for not granting his lust to make violation towards Allah; (2) being patient to control his soul to be sincere doing good deeds in order to have His blessing; (3) being patient to face every temptation he bears; being patient to control bad behaviour causing bad characters that He hates; (5) being patient to behave well when interacting with people and doing activities.

*Syukur* (being grateful) comprises of three domains: *ilmu* (knowledge), *hal* (things) and *amal* (good deeds). The art of being grateful is to understand that a blessing is given only by Allah. The bliss emerged for getting the blessing is called *hal*. *Istiqomah* or somebody's consistency in his love to Allah and behave well as directed by Him is called *amal syukur*.

*Raja* (hope) is waiting for something pleasing, blissful, and satisfying. *Raja* is fully expecting Allah's blessing. At the basic level, a *sufi* person has a hope to meet enjoyment from Allah both in today's world and in the hereafter. At the higher level, he has a bunch of hope to uncover screen between he and Him (Alghazali).

*Khauf* (being afraid) is an uneasy feeling for being afraid of the future disaster. There are three level of *khauf*. First, being afraid of doing something *haram* (forbidden) as a cause of sins (*khauf*). Second, being afraid of something *syubhat* or doubting (*taqwa*). Third, being afraid of losing time to remember Allah (*shidiq*) (Alghazali, p. 294).

*Zuhud* (being ascetic) is keeping aside secular things. It is a noble maqam of *asufi*. To Sufyan al-Tsauri, it narrows somebody's hope, not to eat something hard, and not to wear tangled coat as well.

*Tawakal* (surrender only to Allah) is the high maqam of those who believe in Him (al-Ghazali, p. 294). Sahal bin Abdullah says that *tawakal* is releasing what is expected by leaning on Him (al-Qusyairi, p. 36).

*Rido*, according to Abdullah bin Khafif, is divided into two: *rido* with Him in the meaning of thinking and reflecting on Him; and *rido* with Him in the context of accepting His decision (al-Qusyairi, p. 36).

*Mahabbah* (love) to Allah is the last and the highest *maqam* to reach by a *sufi*. There is no other *maqam* after it but the effect related to *mahabbah*, such as longing, *uns* and *rido*. There is no *maqam* before it but as beginnings, such as *taubat*, *sabar* and *zuhud* (Alghazali, p. 294).

Among those maqamat *aqamat al-Yaqin, mahabbah* gives effects with its more delicate different description, so it is formulated the following terms: *al-uns, sakar, and fana*. *Al-Uns* basically the top step of *maqam raja'* and has come to the core of the *maqam mahabbah*. If love has loaded somebody, he will be mad (*sakar*) when a *sufi* experiences *fana* or annihilation of himself or all creatures, then his awareness about himself and those creatures is lost (*fana*). He does not sense the present of himself and other creatures for his business perfection with The Perfect Ones (Al-Qusyairi, p. 36).

### 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*Doa*

By Amir Hamzah

*Dengan apakah kubandingkan pertemuan kita, kekasihku?  
Dengan senja samar sepoi, pada masa purnama meningkat naik,  
setelah menghalaukan panas payah terik.  
Angin malam menghembus lemah, menyejuk badan,  
melambung rasa menayang pikir, membawa angan ke bawah kursimu.  
Hatiku terang menerima katamu, bagai bintang memasang lilinnya.  
Kalbuku terbuka menunggu kasihmu, bagai sedap malam menyirak kelopak.  
Aduh, kekasihku, isi hatiku dengan katamu, penuhi dadaku  
dengan cahayamu, biar bersinar mataku sendu, biar berbinar  
gelakku rayu!*

#### 3.1 The Analysis of Symbol

The poem entitled “Doa” written by Amir Hamzah (1998) was analysed based on its quality and originality of the symbol. This poem has a good quality since all symbols bring meanings which describe intended feelings and nuances that can be seen in the first stanza below:

*//Dengan apakah kubandingkan pertemuan kita, kekasihku?! Dengan senja samar sepoi, pada masa purnama meningkat naik, setelah menghalaukan panas payah terik.//*

Moreover, the use of symbol in the following stanzas show a good quality of symbol which is arranged appropriately.

*//Angin malam menghembus lemah, menyejuk badan, melambung rasa menayang pikir, membawa angan ke bawah kursimu.//  
//Hatiku terang menerima katamu, bagai bintang memasang lilinnya. Kalbuku terbuka menunggu kasihmu, bagai sedap malam menyirak kelopak.//*

In terms of its originality, “private” symbol is originally used in this poem which is never found in other poems.

#### 3.2 The Analysis of Structure

Some structures in the poem are analysed as follow:

##### 3.2.1 The Beauty of Poetry

The beauty of poetry was found in the stanza “How should I compare our meeting, my beloved?”. It tells some dialogues between the writer of the poem and the God. It can be seen from a meeting described in this poem is not a real meeting between human which has a dimension, space, form, and direction. In this case, prayer is a dimension which describes the meeting of the first and the second person or the human and his/her God. To some extents of this relationship, the word “my beloved” is used as an intimate address from a creature who deeply loves his/her creator (The God). This row has a specific rhetorical style showing the pure and beautiful meeting between the lover and the beloved one as can be seen in the following stanzas.

*Dengan senja samar sepoi, pada masa purnama meningkat naik,  
setelah menghalaukan panas payah terik.*

The lover compares that lovely moment to the beauty of natural paint which gives a nuance of freshness and replaces a hot atmosphere as can be found in the following stanzas:

*Angin malam menghembus lemah, menyejuk badan, melambung rasa menayang pikir, membawa angan ke bawah kursimu.*

In addition, the pure and romantic condition in that meeting is like as a night breeze which slowly blows, touching body, bringing the feelings, thoughts, and wishes into a place of the creator’s throne and stay under the creator’s throne or “kursi”.

The word “*kursi*” in this case does not literally refer to a real object but it deals with a divine nature as stated in the verse Q.S. 2: 255, known as “*ayat kursi*”. According to al-Alusi in the Tafsir on page 317, the word “*kursi*” represent a great throne which covers the seventh heaven. He said, if seven layers of the sky and seven layers of the earth are put together and interlocked each other, will not reach the extent of the throne. Furthermore, it is said that the throne is a symbol of power and the regulation of Almighty God.

*Hatiku terang menerima katamu, bagai bintang memasang lilinnya.*

*Kalbuku terbuka menunggu kasihmu, bagai sedap malam menyirak kelopak.*

*Menerima firman Allah, kalbu aku (lirik) terang seperti bintang menyala; menunggu cinta sang Kekasih, hati aku (lirik) terbuka seperti kelopak bunga sedap malam yang merekah.*

The above Stanzas tells the readers a holly and romantic atmosphere in a prayer. However, those prayers are also indicated as a request which is commonly presented in the form of Imperative sentences. Therefore, the following stanzas show a request made by a creature to his/her God:

*Aduh, kekasihku, isi hatiku dengan katamu, penuhi dadaku dengan cahayamu, biar bersinar mataku sendu, biar berbinar gelakku rayu!*

*Andai hati telah berisi firman Allah yang berfaidah memberi petunjuk dan dada telah penuh dengan cahaya-Nya yang berfungsi menerangi alam ruhani, maka kemurungan sang pencinta di dalam situasi redup merindu menjadi bersinar dan berbinar.*

In contrast, if this poem has another title- not “Doa”, it may potentially lead the readers to get misinterpretation because they think that the relationship is not between a creature and his/her creator (God). In this case, the readers would think as what they thought that it represents a moment when two lovers who fall in love meet each other. Consequently, in the last stanza the writer literally exposes that it is a prayer of creature toward his/her creator.

### 3.3 The Beauty of Poetry "Doa" by Amir Hamzah

Typographically, this poem is almost similar to prose. Most of the poems mainly pay attention to the use of dominant rhymes while in this poem the use of rhyme is almost neglected. Rima is usually intertwined with the rhythm to construct a musical poem. Nevertheless, the musicality in this poem is arranged through applying rhythm and a little rhyme which make it beautiful. The selection of dictions with suggestive meanings is used to create a beautiful poem which reveals a very beautiful image. Those nuances of meaning, concrete suggestive words, and imagery are dominant and powerful elements to arrange the beauty of the poem image.

### 3.4 Assessing Sufism and Wisdom Values

Assessment of *sufistic* level and height of wisdom value are constructed through inter-textual steps modified from Riffaterre semiotic method. The search of inter-textual leads to the poetic relationship with the "Sufi cultural book", especially in the concept of *tasawuf* inscribed in the text of the classic book of Tasawwuf. The search for harmony with the book of Tasawuf will result in an assessment of the level of the poetry sophisticated study. The stronger the harmony, the stronger the *tasawuf* level. Thus, this poem can be categorized as a *Sufi* poem.

Moreover, in searching the harmony in *Sufism* concept, this inter-textual search also attempts to find the height of the attainment of its *tasawuf* maqam. Whether in tune with the initial maqam or has reached the highest rank in the order in accordance with what is written in the theoretical study section on the front page. The *maqam* in this concept of *maqmatmat al-Yaqin* consist of: (1) repentance, (2) patience, (3) thankful, (4), khauf, (5) king, (6) *zuhud*, (7) *tawakkal*, (8) *rido*, and (9) *mahabbah* (love). *Maqam* love is the highest *maqam* with fruits of love such as: *alhaibah*, *al-uns*, *sakar*, and mortal.

Comparing to the concept of *Sufism*, Amir Hamzah's poem of "Doa", according to the researchers' perception, this poem is considered to have a strong alignment because it can be categorized as a poetry with a strong *tasawuf* level. Furthermore, the process of reaching the highest level of *maqam* can be obtained through the level of *Yaqin* as *tasawuf maqam*, whereas the highest *maqam* is love *maqam* (*mahabbah*) which is

supported by some feelings such as longing, intimacy or intimacy (*-Uns*). Thus, this poem shows the attainment of a high degree of wisdom.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the result of analysis and discussion relating to the analysis method of *sufistic* poetry, it is revealed that the analysis method is a modification result from Riffaterre semiotic study. It is done through three steps namely: the analysis of symbol, structure and *tasawuf*. However, the third stage was executed referring to sufi classical concept book particularly the concept of *maqom al-yaqin* which is found in a classic book. Therefore, this paper investigates values of beauty and wisdoms in “Doa”, a poem written by Amir Hamzah. There are some points that can be highlighted as follow:

- The poem of “Doa” consist of the quality of symbols and originality;
- The poem of “Doa” has a high aesthetic value;
- The poem of “Doa” has a high level of *tasawuf* and show the highest level of *maqam tasawuf*.

## REFERENCES

- Al-Ghazali, (without year). In Abu Hamid bin Muhammad bin Muhammad. *Ihya 'Ulumiddin*. Maktabah al-Syamilah.
- Al-Makky, Abu Thalib (without year). *Qūtu al-Qulub fi Muā'amalati al-Mahbub wawashfi thariqi al-Murid ilā maqāmi al-Tauhid*. Maktabah al-Syamilah.
- Al-Qusyairi (without year). *Al-Risālatu al-Qusyairiyyah*. Maktabah al-Syamilah.
- Braginsky, V. I., 1994. *The meaning of beauty in classic Malay literature*, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka. Kuala Lumpur.
- Budiman, M., 2001. *Membaca Sastra: Pengantar Memahami Sastra untuk Perguruan Tinggi (Reading to literature: an introduction to literature in higher education)*, Indonesia Tera. Jakarta.
- Pradopo, R. D., 2002. *Kritik Sastra Indonesia Modern (Critics on modern Indonesia literature)*, Gama Media. Yogyakarta.
- Riffaterre, M., 1998. *Semiotics of poetry*, Indiana University Press. Bloomington.
- Rustom, 2005. Sufi Poems: A Medieval Anthology. *Islamica*, p.114.
- Viitamäki, M., 2015. *Poetry in Sufi Practice Patrons, Poets and Performers in South Asian Sufism from Thirteenth Century to the Present (Dissertation)*, University of Helsinki. Helsinki.