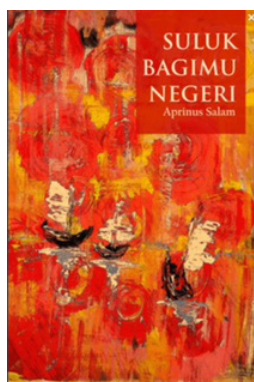


BOOK REVIEW

***Suluk Bagimu Negeri***

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The birth of a collection of poems entitled *Suluk Bagimu Negeri* by the author is intended as a ‘heritage’ and also as something to hold when the death comes suddenly. Difficulties and fatigue can be sensed in the process of writing, either because it is a burden that will be used as the provision of his death so that the diction chosen should represent anxiety about it or something else, Wallahu a’lam. Feelings of anxiety and difficulty are explicitly unraveled since *Suluk Pengantar* (Introduction), paragraph by paragraph, will continue to be perceived until this book ends.

Aprinus Salam as the author of this book of poetry, in addition to being known as an academic, thinker, cultural observer, literary and cultural writer who is very productive in the mass media, he is also one of the litterateurs/poets who chose to open opportunities that exploit the language and the meaning of language that is untouched by other communicators. He is able to display a language that is not only brilliant, but also enriches the treasures of poetry. The power of his poetry lies in the integrity of the structure, the clarity of disclosure, the novelty of the parable, and its meticulousness in revealing details.

Suluk Bagimu Negeri can be categorized as *Sufi* literature, which is a literary work that has criteria and identity that is more specific than the term religious literature or Islamic literature. In the general criteria a literary work is considered to fulfill the attribute of *Sufi* literature if the work is primarily and firstly a literary work which questions the principles of *Tawhid* (the principle of God oneness), the principle of God’s existence, the mortal-immortal principle, the principle of God’s penetration, and human’s free will, and the

derivation associated with these principles. In other words, if a work does not contain these principles then the work does not belong to *Sufi* literature. This categorization occurs by identifying the sign that according to Saussure is an indivisible unity of two fields, that is, the signifier to describe ‘forms’ or ‘expressions’ and the signified to explain ‘concepts’ or ‘meanings.’

This collection of poems which consist of sixty-four titles of poetry are structured in 4 chapters (though not explicitly mentioning the word chapter), namely (1) *Pada Mulanya* (In the Beginning), (2) *Ketika, Menjadi* (When, Being), (3) *Para Pribadi* (The Individuals), (4) *Tak Pernah Akhir* (Never End). When examined, the chapter sequence is like a human’s life cycle from birth, growing, developing, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, getting old, and dying. It is more convincing that, the sequence corresponds to the title, *Suluk* which means the path to inner perfection; *Sufism*; spiritual counseling; and also mysticism. The sequence is the way to inner perfection. Next, I will explore that path by parsing some of the contents of the poem in each chapter.

“*Pada Mulanya*” (In the Beginning). One of the poems that is part of it, entitled “*Suluk Buah Apel*”, contains “*Kutitipkan apel pada Adam, ia meminta hawa, kulepaskan birahi dan nikmat, kubebaskan hasrat kanak. Ketika kecemasan terus mengelupas, kutata huruf-huruf di rusukku, bersama sungai dan kolam-kolam, oase mata air, dan pohon-pohon kuldi. Cuma Adam meminta lebih, hawa tergoda, kuturunkan ia di halaman dekat rumahku, ia pun harus menanak air, memetik buahnya sendiri dan berburu. Kini apel itu kuiris-iris, dalam sejarah dan buku-buku*

yang sobek, ingatan pun sirna. Apel itu kini telah aku makan, bijinya aku tanam, ke segala penjuru.” (I entrusted an apple to Adam, he asked for Eve, I released lust and enjoyment, I liberated the desire of a child. As the anxiety continued to peel, I jotted down letters in my ribs, along with the rivers and pools, the oasis of springs, and the trees of the apple. But then Adam asked for more, and Eve was tempted, I lowered him in the yard near my house, he had to boil water, picking his own fruit and hunting. Now I sliced that apple, in the history and torn books, the memory is gone. I have eaten the apple, its seeds I planted, in all directions). It is not difficult to interpret this phrase, because it explicitly shows how the incident when Adam and Eve were expelled and descended onto the world. In the world they multiplied to develop offsprings that were implicitly represented by the sentence “the seeds I plant”. This shows the genesis of human beings, people, who are part of the archipelago, and the archipelago is a part of God. The existence of the archipelago is telling the existence of God.

In another heading, “*Suluk Laut*”, it contains “*Di dalam diriku kau salurkan air, kau perintahkan bersemayam di lubuk, menjadi gelombang yang berkejaran ke pantai. Begitulah, engkau pun berenang bersama perahu, seperti ikan-ikan yang tak membutuhkan mata angin, hilir mudik tak ke mana, tak keluar dari diriku. Dalam pusar angin, aku merasa engkau pergi jauh, kembara yang menjejakkan kakinya hingga batas pulau. Kukandung berlaksa asin, dan timbunan kegelapan, juga kesunyian yang terasa garang. Maka, begitu banyak cerita yang kau dengungkan, tentang jin dan setan yang membangun mahligai, atau kisah-kisah kapal tenggelam, bongkahan karang dan harta terpendam. Katamu aku juga beliung dan angin topan, tsunami yang tak tahu di manakah itu dalam diriku. Aku laut yang beruntung jika kau pandang, tak ke mana aku pergi, kalau aku adalah tujuan.*” (You channel the water through me, you command it to dwell in the bottom of my heart, becoming waves that chases one another to the beach. And so be it, you swim along the boats, like fish that do not need direction, not going anywhere, not leaving me. In the whirlwind, I feel you are going a long way, the one who set his feet to the end of the island. I am drenched with salt, and a pile of darkness, and a solemn silence. So, there are so many stories you are humming, about jinns and demons who built the palace chambers, or stories of sinking ships, lumps of corals and hidden treasures. You say I am also a

tornado and a hurricane, a tsunami that does not know where it is inside me. I’m a lucky sea when you look at me, I am not going anywhere, if I am a destination). The word sequence in this poem is very beautiful, how the author wants to tell the genesis of human beings, from a drop of water (semen) is symbolized by “I am the ocean”. Of course the placement of “*Suluk Laut*” in this chapter is not unintentional.

Next, “*Ketika, Menjadi*” (When, Being) offers a collection of poems with various values of life that anyone should have as His creation. Among them is how was the ‘I’, who had tried to prove that he was not the guilty one, but still received his punishment, as in the fragment of the poetry “*Tuhan Tak Bisa Ditipu*” (God Cannot be Deceived) on the verse “... *Sebagaimana halnya sebuah kisah, sehabis kau bunuh seseorang penista, kau setubuhi dirinya, tertangkap basah, kau menusuk perutmu, tak bisa aku menahan, keris ini aku pegang...*” (...Just like a story, after you killed a sinner, you had sex with her, caught red handed, stabbed your own stomach, I couldn’t hold it, this blade I held). And it was affirmed in the previous verse, “...*Telah kuhibahkan diriku pada hujatan, agar kau pahlawan, aku pecundang...*” (...I have submitted myself in blasphemy, so you are a hero, I am a loser...). The sincerity of accepting blasphemy has been proved in the verse. But the ‘I’ believes that God cannot be deceived that the righteous will certainly receive their reward which is proven in the verse “... *Dimuliakanlah namamu, bersama sorga yang telah dijanjikan...*” (Glorified is your name, along with the promised heaven).

Another value of life is found in another chapter, *Seseorang, Penambal Ban* (Someone, the Tire Repairman), and that is patience, perseverance in striving to survive. The series of verses illustrates as, “...*Biarlah, biarlah aku menunggumu di sini, duduk di pinggir jalan, menunggumu. Kalau kau tak mampir tak banyak yang aku kerjakan, selebar dua lembar koran bekas cukuplah mengisi waktuku. Tak apa-apa, biarlah aku tetap menunggumu, di sini, di jalan ini, tak hendak kemana aku...*”. (...It’s okay, let me wait for you here, sitting by the side of the road, waiting for you. If you do not stop by, nothing much I could do, a sheet or two of a used newspaper is enough to fill time. It’s okay, let me keep waiting for you, here, on this road, I’m not going anywhere...). Nevertheless, there is another value that shows His glory, although the ‘I’ is waiting for a bike with a flat tire, but the ‘I’ is not happy when someone does stop by because their tire is flat. It is written on the verse “...*Tak bahagia aku*

kalau kau mampir karena banmu bocor. Janganlah banmu sampai bocor. Tak bahagia aku...” (I’m not happy if you stop by because of your tire is flat. I do not want your tires to be flat. I’m not happy...). And many more values of life are described in the poetry that is a part of this chapter.

The author chooses the words, arranges the sentences, and sorts the meaning. The author thinks, the author contemplates, then preaches a piece of poetry. This is not about clear, easily understood news. Some of them are concealed. Let the author smile, grieve, be anxious, stomp and think, and it is his right to keep the true meaning for himself. Therefore, it is not necessary for us to labor, scratch, and find out what are hidden.

The next chapter is *Para Pribadi* (The Individuals). In this chapter the poem shown entitled with names of animals, starting from dog (1, 2, 3, and 4), crow (1, 2, 3, and 4), fish, serpent, mousedeer, rabbit, worm, cats, birds, and caterpillar phrases. Through the ‘I’ as animal, the author is very beautifully putting together the fifth pillar of faith, destiny, in line after line of sentences in the poem entitled *Suluk Gagak* (2) as follows, “*Aku tak pernah memilih suaraku, kadang erang kadang rintih, bukan soal takdir tapi cinta yang tak dimengerti. Suaraku membuatmu kalut, akupun tak nyaman, bukan aku menggoda kematian, atau ruh yang kelayapan. Kalau boleh milih, kupilih seruling bambu, atau suara nyanyian gemersik pohon, atau desau hujan. Atau rintik angin. Kasih, bagaimanapun, aku milikmu, bawalah aku pergi.*” (I never choose my voice, sometimes moaning sometime groaning, it is not about destiny but love that is not understood. My voice makes you frantic, I am also uncomfortable, I’m not tempting the death, or the crawling spirit. If I may choose, I choose a bamboo flute, or the sound of a tree rustling, or the rain. Or the wind. Love, however it was, I’m yours, take me away). That, the ‘I’/crow, never refuses his fate, he believed in the fate. All he asks is the recognition of being with the confession he has already confessed.

Another revelation related to the third pillar of faith is engraved in a poem entitled *Suluk Anjing* (4). How the ‘I’/dog, with full consciousness that his saliva is unholy and has to be washed seven times when anyone who believes in God is contacted with the dog’s saliva. Here is the content, “*Kadang lolongku melukai perasaanmu, maka perjalanan tak pernah setia, dalam lolongku kau harapkan kedukaan. Bukan gonggong bukan lolong, cuma liurku tumpah, mengalir ke jalan, biarlah kubersihkan kesucianmu.*

Tak berguna aku pada syahwatmu, kecuali kubawa kehinaan, kujulurkan moncongku, mengemis cintamu. Biarlah kusayat lidahku.” (Sometimes my howling hurts your feelings, then the journey is never faithful, in my howl you expect grief. Not a bark not a howl, only spilling my saliva, pouring onto the road, let me cleanse your purity. I do not serve your lust, I only bring humiliation, I stretch out my muzzle, begging for your love. Let me lacerate my tongue). That way, when the ‘I’ realizes that he is full of sin, the ‘I’ with full conscience will wipe it away that through this poem it is expressed with the sentence “*...kusayat lidahku*” (... lacerate my tongue). Thus, only a few examples of ways of expressing the author through the beautiful words full of meaning he assembled in this chapter which is the recognition of faith he hold dear.

In the last chapter, *Tak Pernah Akhir* (Never End), still with his full consistency, the author shares his great anxiety, waiting for “that moment” to arrive, as revealed in *Suluk Kalimat*, “*...Ketika seruling kematian itu kau perdengarkan, kata-kata menyatu kembali, menjadi satu, membawaku ke tempat yang engkau janjikan. Aku tetap disini dengan kata-kata, yang tak pernah selesai kau ucapkan.*” (When you blow the flute of death, the words reunite, becoming one, taking me to the place you promised. I stay here with the words, which you never finished). This chapter consists of fourteen titles of poetry, in addition to *Suluk Kalimat*, there are *suluk senja*, *suluk malam*, *suluk harta karun*, *suluk suara-suara itu*, *suluk bunyi-bunyian*, *suluk nyiur melambai*, *suluk rayuan pulau kelapa*, *suluk burung garuda* (1 dan 2), and ended by *suluk nusantara* (1,2, dan 3), and *suluk bagimu negeri*. If it is noticed, that core of the story of *Suluk Bagimu Negeri* is contained in this chapter. “*Suluk Bagimu Negeri*” becomes the conclusion of this poem collection.

Suluk Bagimu Negeri

Bagimu negeri jiwa raga kami
(For you, my homeland, we give our body and soul)

Inilah tanahku ketika aku lahir

(This is where I was born)

Tanah aku belajar bermain

(The land where I played as a child)

Berkebun dan berdoa

(Planted and prayed)

Tubuhku, diri yang tak meragu

(My body, a self without hesitation)

Sawah dan ladang menyemak
(Paddy fields and lush land)
Latar gunung di kejauhan
(A faraway mountain)
Padi bergulir gemuk dan segar
(Rice grains are fully rippen)
Rumah jantungku berdetak
(My heart is beating)
Burung-burung dan seruling
(Birds and a flute)
Dan rerumputan yang lebat
(And the lush grass)

Aku melihat tangan dan kakimu
(I see your hands and feet)
Tiang-tiang itu kau pancangkan
(The pickets you put in the ground)
Yang mencium wangi airmu
(That smell the fragrance of your water)

Akulah dalam mata yang berbinar
(I am with sparkling eyes)
Berenang dalam danau dan kebeningan
(Swimming in the lake of clear water)
Aku mabuk kuyup, menari bersama
(I'm drunken and soaked, together dancing)

Tak ada yang bisa aku serahkan pAdamu
(Nothing I can give to You)
Akulah tanah dan pulau-pulau itu
(I am those lands and islands)

Bagiku negeriku, jiwa ragaku
(My homeland is my body and soul)

“*Suluk Bagimu Negri*” as an ending, a marker that connects the existence of an endless state, the symbolization of death which is also not an end. A country that must continue to make efforts endlessly, step by step to achieve its goals. All of them are symbolized through the ‘I’ in various forms.

In this collection of poems, the reader will discover the wealth of God’s creation which is entrusted to humans, and therefore we are also made aware of our obligation to cherish it. Slowly, the readers continue to be directed to understand in a very compelling way through a series of words, phrases, sentences, and verses that are very closely related by the author. Perhaps this is the reason why the author felt the greater anxiety and bigger difficulty when he was creating this work compared to when he wrote

other works. *Wallahu a’lam.*

For the readers, the success of the author should be appreciated by reading, understanding the content, and its meaning. For researchers, especially literature researchers, this collection of poetry, is a wonderful challenge to face.

Congratulations...