



A STUDY ON AWANG GONENG'S GROWING UP IN TRENGGANU

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Abstract- Literature generally observes and critically presents the essence of reality or real incidents. It is based upon tradition, culture, richness and greenery of a society. Moreover, it can be classified into two namely, oral literature and written literature. The former includes ballads, myth, jokes, folktales, fables, etc. whereas the latter includes drama, novel, poetry, prose, short story, etc. novel writing is more peculiar, the most appealing, interesting, fascinating and delightful genre. The term novel is originated from the Italian word called as 'novella', which means 'a new story' or 'a new minute thing'. After many years, this definition is shortened to novel which means 'new'. Hence, all the novels have surely a new thought, idea, plot, character, etc. Novel possesses narrative stories which are different from short stories. This article tries to analyse the literary work written by Awang Goneng who is one of the writers and journalists in Malaysia, settled in abroad. His work 'Growing up in Trengganu' is a reflection and eventful life he led in a place called Kuala Trengganu in Malaysia. He recollects his past experiences in this place and narrates how it has changed.

Key words: literature, novel, Trengganu, experience.

I. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary literature is a literature which has a setting after World War II. It contains various themes like, war, romance, family, etc. Contemporary literature began after 1940's (Nicoll, 1923). This literature is based on reality stories. The characters are well defined and highly developed. Moreover, it reflects political, social, personal and environment issues. Contemporary literature includes dramas, short stories, fictions, novels, documentaries, poems and autobiographies (Haji, 2010). The term *novel* is originated from the Italian word called as 'novella', which means 'a new story' or 'a new minute thing'. After many years, this definition is shortened to *novel* which means 'new'. The word *novel* had been used by the English speaking community since the 16th century. The term novel was introduced in Asian countries through their education. The introduction of novel was started in Malaysia at the end of the nineteenth century (Ponniah and et.al., 2019). In *An Anthology of Contemporary Malaysian Literature*, a collection and the best of Malaysian works are found. It was published in 1988. It deals a collection of literary works from the period when Malaysians were rediscovering their identity and their culture, and slouching off the thick shroud of colonial British culture and literature. Their steps might not be as firm as we would like them to be, but they are proud moves that foregrounded the language of the land and its culture (Haji, 2010). Later in 2007, Awang Goneng published *Growing Up in Trengganu*. It narrates the childhood story of own and how the place Terengganu has changed after long years. It is a collection of memories retold. This article tries to analyse the literary work *Growing Up in Trengganu* regarding the changes that occurred.

II. MALAYSIA

Malaysia is an ASEAN country situated in between Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia. The name 'Malaysia' is derived with the combination of the word *Malay* and the Greek suffix *-sia*. Traders reached Malaysia during the early periods. The first inhabitants are thought to be Negritos (En Britannica, 2012). Later the traders from India and China settled in Malaysia in the earlier period of first century. The kingdom of Langkasuka was established in the second century and lasted upto 15th century. Islam spread here in the 14th century. In 1511, Portuguese conquered Melaka and in 1641 it fell in the hands of Dutch. Later in 1786, the British Empire was established. Finally, Malaysia became independent on 31st August 1957. Malaysia consists of different states and Sarawak is one among them.

III. TRENGGANU

Trengganu is now called as Kuala Terengganu. It is one of the smallest districts in terms of area in Malaysia. Previously it was called even as Tringgnau. Historians claim that, Chinese dominated the place during the reign of Sui and Tang dynasties. They called this place as Tan-Tan. Evidences have proved that tributes were sent to China from this place. After the collapse of Sui dynasty, it fell in the hands of Arabian invaders. Trengganu was the first Malay place to receive Islam. The Terengganu inscription stone with Arabic inscriptions found in Kula Berang dates from 702 to 789 AH are evidence for this. It is located in the shore of sea and Terengganu river adds beauty to it. There are many islands nearby and Redang Island is one among them. Most of people who lived in 1980's called 'Trengganu' as 'Teganung', 'Tegau', 'Ganu' and 'Gganu'. Awang Goneng is one among them who called 'Teganung' instead of 'Trengganu'.

IV. AWANG GONENG

Awang Goneng is one of the writers and journalists in Malaysia. He was born in Trengganu, Malaysia. He did his degree in Law. He now lives in London. Through his book, *Growing up in Trengganu*, he recollects his old memories. At first, he created a blog and posted his memories of Trengganu. Later, according to friends' advice, he revised and published in the form of book. He says, 'This book took shape over many years (I grew up very slowly), was written in many places and spent a good few years as rough drafts on the internet where it was discovered by a handful of people who very kindly sent me emails or left comments that confirmed, corrected or added to what I'd written there.' (Goneng, 2007).

V. GROWING UP IN TRENGGANU

The literary work *Growing Up in Trengganu* consists of more than 145 real stories. All are short and well narrated. For this study only a few are analysed namely *Egg on a Stick*, *Inlet by the Sea* and *Conference of Birds*.

5.1 EGG ON A STICK

This story is based on an egg. Trengganu is of a *kampung* (village) set up. Everyday cockerels cock, hens lay eggs and they flight, birds fly with sound, people walk and talk. There is a tradition behind the eggs in the Trengganu village. In Malay weddings a hard-boiled egg, coloured bright red or green or yellow, that's been pierced through its base by a long thin stick that comes out through the apex with a crown of some hand-made flowers or leaves. A person who married a Trengganu girl had an experience about the *egg on a stick*. The person took an egg placed on a stick, kept in a room and left the room. Thinking that, it is the safe place to keep the egg. When he returned after a while, he noticed only the stick and shell of an egg. He shouted, 'Who ate my egg?' (p.127). He shouted because he knows the importance of an egg. An old Malay book advices an important man should swallow a raw egg on a Thursday morning, do it again on Friday morning and after that again on Saturday morning. Hence, in Trengganu village, the eggs are food for folk, decorates a stick and is also the paraphernalia for magic. When relatives assemble, when attending sick persons, etc. eggs play an important role, i.e. they feed them with eggs. Moreover, old people tell sand, gravel and lime mixed with egg white are bind together to construct buildings. 'Old mosques in Trengganu were built with glue made from many hundreds of litres of egg white mixed into mortar' (p.128). In the current situation in Trengganu, no one cares about eggs. The story, *Egg on a Stick* clearly says about the importance of egg which has vanished at present.

5.2 INLET BY THE SEA

Pantai Teluk is a sea shore in Trengganu. 'Pantai Teluk is an inlet of tranquil water, sheltered from the lashing waves by a sandbar that ran until it dissipated in the harbour' (p. 158). Sailors sailed, had white sand, boats decorated with long service medals of barnacles, fishing boats, etc. are found in Pantai Teluk. It served the Tanjong market as its trademen's entrance. Also, people here enjoyed the calm place which is the shore of the water. But things changed now. The author says, 'Pantai Teluk doesn't exist anymore' (p. 158).

5.3 CONFERENCE OF BIRDS

This story narrates the existence of birds in Trengganu. In early days especially before independence of Malaysia and Singapore, Trengganu was surrounded by birds of different varieties. The music of birds decorated the granary houses. Children used to play with the birds. The famous book entitled, *The Birds of the Malay Peninsula* describes about the varieties of birds found in Trengganu. The narrator says, 'In Malay peninsula, I found another talking bird called, intriguingly, Brain-fever bird, from Ipoh' (p. 298). Moreover, he says, there were a number of birds flew above their heads in Trengganu, though they didn't pay the birds much heed, but there were here, because of coastal kids, who had many fish to dry and fry. The whole area was loud, melodious and dancing of birds which invited many other birds to this area. Sometimes they were irritating particularly when they yell at night. Now these cannot be seen or heard and became a memory. The author says, 'There are gaps in my memory.....I can remember..' (p. 298). The story was the experience of the author by himself who recollects about the sweet melodies of the birds. All happened when he was a child and now things have changes. He couldn't see birds and no one talks about the melancholy of birds.

VI. CONCLUSION

Literary works always reflect the societies and its environments. People read them for different purposes. Heyer & Barrett (1971) state that, 21st audience read for three main objectives namely, to obtain knowledge, to enjoy (fun) and for a specified purpose like exam, interview etc. The literary works are not based upon the readers, it stands for the society (Thambi Jose, S. F, 2018). Even imagination or fallacy tales are part of it. The audience of *Growing Up in Trengganu* are the people who recollect their past memories. Each and every short stories narrated in that work explains the experience and memories. To conclude, three things can be learnt by the selected three stories such as *Village Set Up*, *Inlet by the Sea* and *Conference of Birds*. They are, firstly due course of time, the village set up of Trengganu has changed into a city. New buildings, new houses, new roads, etc. are seen everywhere and this can be termed under 'development'. Secondly, the settings of a sea shore have vanished. This is, because sea shore has become an entertainment dwelling for many people. Also, it became a playing place for the kids. Hence, the old setting of the shore has been changed. Thirdly, the birds flew to other places to be safe and far from pollution. Many of the birds lost their shelters and food due to the lack of shelters, hence it is a compulsion for them to move to other places. The reason is due to the advancement in technology and new infrastructure. No doubt, Awang Goneng has clearly pictured his past memories and the new changes due to various reasons.

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