

Book Review of *Negeri 5 Menara* Written By Ahmad Fuadi

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Abstrak

Negeri 5 Menara adalah sebuah novel yang mengangkat cerita kehidupan Pondok Pesantren di Jawa yang syarat akan nilai kehidupan. Novel karya Ahmad Fuadi ini merupakan salah satu novel best seller yang banyak menginspirasi para pembaca. Membaca novel *Negeri 5 Menara* ini membawa kita untuk ikut terjun di dalam kisah – kisah seru dan inspiratif, dimana hubungan persahabatan, aktivitas pendidikan yang diceritakan terlihat begitu hidup. Lewat mantra “Man Jadda Wajada”, siapa yang bersungguh-sungguh, melakukan usaha lebih dari yang orang lain lakukan, maka keberhasilan akan didapat. Alif seorang anak perantau yang menggapai mimpi-mimpinya bersama teman - temannya, para “Sahibul Menara”. Dengan semangat dan keikhlasan untuk memperoleh pendidikan dan berani bermimpi tinggi. Tekanan batin karena keinginan masuk SMA negeri pupus dan dibayangi-bayangi oleh kebahagiaan sahabat kampungnya Randai yang berhasil masuk Universitas yang dulu mereka cita – citakan. Kelebihan dari novel ini banyak pelajaran penting tentang kehidupan yang dipaparkan, bahasanya pun mengalir namun tetap lugas khas bahasa wartawan sehingga mudah dipahami. Pengarang juga menyelipkan candaan khas pondok, lirik lagu, dan syair – syair islam yang mengobarkan semangat bagi siapa saja yang membacanya. Adapun kekurangan novel ini terlihat dari klimaks cerita yang kurang menonjol, sehingga pembaca merasa dinamika cerita sedikit datar. Setelah selesai membaca, pembaca akan merasa cerita belum selesai setuntas-tuntasnya. Hal ini mungkin disebabkan karena penulis mendasarkan ceritanya pada kisah nyata dan tidak ingin melebih-lebihkannya. Namun hal itu tidak menjadi hambatan yang berarti untuk melahap habis isi novel ini. Novel *Negeri 5 Menara* ini merupakan novel yang sangat menarik, karena selain sarat akan pesan moral pendidikan dan nilai- nilai persahabatan, novel ini juga memiliki kekuatan untuk memotivasi pembacanya agar percaya pada kekuatan mimpi, ikhlas, dan kerja keras.

a. Introduction

Friendship has always been a good theme to make a good story in a novel. Nevertheless the value of friendship is wrapped with a strong element of education seems to have been rare to find today. *Negeri 5 Menara*, best-selling novel presents many quality content for the readers, especially teens. Through the story of six young people of different colors to the world through the Pesantren.

Probably most people would assume that Pesantren will only produce either seeds of teacher of the Koran or religious leaders. *Negeri 5 Menara* with simple language but still have a strong perception of intriguing will expose this wrong impression. Where education and regulations set up in such a way as to make it an atmosphere of religious learning. It clearly illustrates the impressive education system, in which wherever and whenever is a learning process.

If we see, nowadays, there are still many parents who do not allow their children to go far away for studying. The area become a limit to achieve new experiences. Alif Fikri, wandered away from Sumatera to Java and finally managed to reach his dream through his journey for four years at the school.

Keep in mind, a few times ago there a teacher fight his student at the school. *Negeri 5 Menara* show us about relationship between child with his mom, and student with his teacher are clearly describing in a sweet moment and full of lovable. Give evidence that combination of obey to parent, respect to teacher and study hard are a formula to be a success person.

However, this novel is a religious novel, but Fuadi does not deal with his firm belief. So, this novel could be read not only for Muslims but also non-Muslims who want to understand how to living in Pesantren. Having a system that in a given three month, student can speak English and Arabic fleuntly. This novel explain that learning both of that language is easy, is not like education learning system in our contour.

One of the must read books. A novel which can prove that nothing impossible to reach if we are daring to dream. Man Jadda Wajada.

The main purposes of writing is to review *Negeri 5 Menara* written by Ahmad Fuadi. The authors would like to correct understanding of people who have thought boarding school is all about religious education. This novel is a novel whose terms of motivation and learning of life,

especially for young people who are afraid to dream. Through the story that is not bigoted, the novel is expected to be read not only by Muslims or non-Muslims. Moreover, the writer also explained about the strengths and weaknesses of this novel that coincided with the character, plot, setting, and values contained within to give good reviews.

b. Ahmad Fuadi and His Works

Ahmad Fuadi was born in Bayur, a small village in Maninjau riverside in 1972, where is not far from Buya Hamka Homes. Fuadi went abroad to Java island, obeying his mother's demand to enter a Pesantren. Nevertheless, he never regret about his decision. By entering Pondok Madani, he gets many experience in his career. Ahmad Fuadi becomes a novelist, journalist and social entrepreneur. Specialities in writing, education and communication. There are some his experiences and careers;

- a. Founder at Komunitas Menara** (January 2010 - Present (3 years 2 months))
- b. Writer/Novelist at SELF** (January 2007 - Present (6 years 2 months))
- c. Director of Communications at The Nature Conservancy-IP** (August 2007 - November 2010 (3 years 4 months))
- d. Publication and Information Specialist at USAID-LGSP** (December

2005 - July 2007 (1 year 8 months))

- e. Journalist/Media Specialist at VOA** (2002 - November 2005 (3 years))
- f. TV Editor and Producer at VOA** (2001 - 2002 (1 year))
- g. Washington Correspondent at TEMPO Magazine** (August 1999 - September 2002 (3 years 2 months))
- h. Research Assistant at Center for Media and Public Affairs, Washington DC** (September 2000 - January 2001 (5 months))
- i. Journalist at TEMPO Magazine**
- j. Royal Holloway, University of London, UK** (MA, Documentary Film, 2004 - 2005)
- k. The George Washington University, USA** (MA, Media and Public Affairs, 1999 - 2001)
- l. National University of Singapore** (NA, Business Administration, 1997 - 1997)
- m. Universitas Padjadjaran (Unpad)** (BA, International Relations, 1992 - 1997.)

c. Summary Of Novel

Beginning from a story of a child named Alif who lives in Maninjau riverside, Bukittinggi, West Sumatera. He recently graduated from Madrasah

Tsanawiyah which is as level as Junior High School.

His achievement was also quite outstanding, he reached the top ten of High Score Achievement in his regency. Well, Alif formerly had a plan with his close friend, Randai, that is continuing further study into the best High School in their town. However, that plan was a plan, because Alif's mother did not fully agree to send Alif to High School with many strong reason. Alif's mother who has a strong religious background wants Alif to continue his studies to religious school again, so he can deeply focus on religious matter. Nevertheless, Alif directly refused that plan, Alif talked strike for three days. During the talk strike, he sent through mail to his uncle, Mr. Etek Gindo, who was studying in Egypt. He suggested that Alif continued his studies into Pondok Madani in Ponorogo, East Java. Because many friend of his uncle become a great speaker in English and Arabic from there. Eventually, Alif accepted that reason and continued his study to Pondok Madani, East Java. His parent quite surprised and really happy to hear that. Finally Alif's father hails him to Pondok Madani by bus about three days.

Arriving at the Madani, Alif and his father did a quick tour around the Pondok Madani. It was revealed that to be accepted as a students in Madani, they have to pass the written test, that is same with student university test which covered all of the science and oral test which covered by reading qur'an. Hence, a two-days preparation, Alif finally

accepted among thousands of applicants.

Opening ceremony for new student was opened by Kiai Rais, the chairman of Madani. In his first day of classes in the Pondok Madani, Alif was struck by a magic word "Man Jadda Wajada", which means, "who wants to do hard work, they will succeed". He amazed with football commentators who spoke in Arabic, student talked in English when he slept, and drilling when he heard thousands of student singing the balade of Abu Nawas and impressed to see the Pondok Madani every morning like flying in the air.

During in Pondok Madani, Alif quite accept his new life owing to his friends who are become Alif's new family. They are Said from Surabaya, Atang from Bandung, Baso from Sulawesi, Raja from Medan, Dulmajid from Madura. Well, his fifth friends were often assembled at the tower stand of the mosque, thus the other student called them as "Sahibul Menara" (Owner of Tower). Each boy got their respective password, or some sort of term, Said is 1st Tower, Raja is 2nd Tower, Alif is 3rd Tower. Atang is 4th Tower, Dulmajid is 5th Tower and Baso is 6th Tower.

On the first day, they are late coming in 5 minutes to the mosque and grasped by Tyson, whose original name is Rajab Sujai, the best of horror and feared by all student. Tyson caught them and punished each other to tweak the ear of theirselves in a series as strong as their could. However, it was nothing at all, they still had to go to the Office

Security Center in Madani version. They had to find two person who commits violation committed by student throughout the Pondok Madani, note the name and class, only during 24 hours. A strange punishment for them. This is it, Pondok Madani, educating the student got at the root of.

Obligatory regulation in Pondok Madani, student must be using two languages in their daily conversation, English and Arabic. Any three times a week, student must be make a speech in Arabic and English. They only may used local dialect or Indonesian for four months. By using their habits to speak only in both of language, speaking skill will be develop. However, they get one day free on Friday and free to do anything, include come out from Pondok and hang out together.

In the Pondok Madani, no one should watch TV because it is considered incompible with the Pondok Madani education and lay down the student dreamy. While only a few radio can be heard, VOA, BBC, and Australian Radio with Arabic and English speaking only. In addition, the news will be published by wall magazine that mounted in different places. Beside that, in Pondok Madani, in no case have a relationship with a girl who is has not family relation. If you found out, so there a vital punishment that is you must be go out from Pondok Madani forever.

Nevertheless, there are many firm regulation in Pondok Madani, they also have something appealing.

If average person feel fear or anxious with examination, so in Pondok Madani the examination like greeting the Great Day, like welcome party. Exactly, two weeks before the first examination's day, the ambience of Pondok Madani will be changed. Fiyers and posters reading Ma'an Najah" scattered everywhere, in classroom, dormitories, cafeteria, trees, even on basketball court. All the teachers were deployed to get around to every dorm and ready to provide answer the questions that students may do not understand with the lesson. Wherever in Pondok Madani, we surely find that student are learning, while lining up to eat, shower, while holding a book in run up, in the stairs of the mosque, on the edge of river, only student doing memorize and discussion which may sound. So, the minority who may be feel slack to learn hard will be increasingly reduced, because of the ambience of deep powerful learning. Another interesting case in Pondok Madani is every year will be held an Exalted Art Show. Student in 6th grade will prepared the event to make it fantastic and spectacular than ever especially for their lovely school.

After that show was end, Alif still has any doubt about his future. Once again the magic word "Man Jadda Wajada" help him. Finally Alif and his friends pass the exam and graduate from Pondok Madani.

In the manner of sincerity in learning a knowledge, by all the motivation and advice which are brace up in getting knowledge, nothing is impossible. In the end of the story, Alif and another Sahibul

Menara shake hands and promise if there is a mass, they will be met.

A story that full of inspiration and motivation based science flows for readers. There is no vanity in each story telling.

d. The Strength of The Novel

1 Character

Character of this novel is strong. Almost of the character are tinting every story. They come to support the main character, he is Alif. Alif Fikri, an obedient son and falling up in his life because his hoping does not realize. Then, he accepted asking of his mother cowardly.

Alif is the protagonist, he presistent to assimilate with Pondok Madani which have many regulation. Fight with his doubt that always interrupt him. Find time to cease from Pondok Madani cause of letter of Randai (Alif's close friend in Padang) who always success make Alif jealous. Alif's character also influenced by his friends and teacher who are always support him to finish his studies.

Baso, a principle boy, a faithful boy, devoting to his parents who are pass away since Baso was baby.

Alif also learn about leadership from Said, a leader of Sahibul Menara. He always looks positive and confident.

Another Alif's friend, Atang, Raja, Dulamajid and also his teacher always give him knowledge and valuable experience.

May be strong character of Alif comes from his parents, called Ayah and Amak. Amak is Alif's mother who is a loving mother and devout. Amak is a mother who always taught her children about discipline in doing everything in their lives. Amak always encouraged her to do and doing religious orders. In addition, the figure Amak is unyielding in defending a principle which is correct to her.

Ayah is Alif's father. Ayah is a character who is the protagonist. Ayah is a loving parental figure and quiet. Ayah always mention the example of Bung Hatta and his trust to fight for religion, people do not have to go Madrasah (muslim school).

2 Theme

Negeri 5 Menara may be one of religious novel, but it has a strong theme that is education. Absolutely everything are about learning in Pondok Madani. Describing how Pondok Madani carry out its school.

In addition, the theme of this novel is about sincerity and hard work to get the dreams and aspirations come true.

3 Plot

Chronology of *Negeri 5 Menara* Novel is a flow back and forth. In which the story is a flashback memories of the main characters of the past when studying at Pondok Madani to produce results that delight our times.

4 Setting

In the novel there are many settings that can be commented on, that are:

Background of place in *Negeri 5 Menara* novel is Washington DC, Lake Maninjau, West Java, Pondok Madani in East Java, and London. Background originates from Washington DC, while Alif receive instant messages from Sahibul Menara, that is Atang.

Then, after reading a message from Atang, Alif memories flew into the past when he was still in his homeland, Maninjau, West Sumatra. Alif told the story begins in Maninjau, before he went to Pondok Madani in East Java.

The story then move into a background places in London, while Alif meet Atang and Raja after he received a text message from Atang. This corresponds to a flashback novel flow (forward-backward-forward).

Social background of the novel *Negeri 5 Menara* begun when the conflict

between Alif and his mother's desire are in contradiction. His mother wants Alif to be like Buya Hamka, a theologian. Alif was forced to follow the wishes of his mother to go to Pondok Madani. He had no intention to attend religious school because his goal is to be like BJ. Habibie.

Social background of the novel describes more a series of strict rules, sincerity is always on display in every corner of Pondok Madani. The students not only get the material, but also get the spirit, the spirit of struggling to realize the ideals.

Social background is also evident from the way of thinking of the members Sahibul Menara who never underestimate dreams despite any height. They remain optimistic to realize their dream to step on the country of their dreams? Way of thinking to those who think there is no dream that can not be achieved with hard work.

This novel is set in a typical work because it has the background and accentuate certain characteristics. Particular background will be find in this novel is the social background. This form of social background thinking leaders like the quote above.

5 Style of Language

It is the element that is also important to review the novel. The language in the novel *Negeri 5 Menara* than using the Indonesian language, is also used common languages.

6 Value

Many values writer gets after reading this novel, there are:

Religious values in this novel can also be seen from the picture of life in a Pondok Madani to educate students to be Muslims who do not easily give up in achieving the dream of using Arabic terms as encouragement. Arabic term like 'Man Jadda Wajada' meaning who is serious will be successful. Then 'Man Shabara Zhafira', those who are patient will be lucky.

Social value of the novel *Negeri 5 Menara* describe fraternity must be maintained despite different backgrounds. This value is evident from the story of Friendship of the Sahibul Menara members of different origins, both while in Pondok Modern or after graduatio.

Moral value emmerges in *Negeri 5 Menara* novel is about discipline. Discipline is very highlighted in the novel since the author wanted to show that discipline is one of the pillars of character that

should be owned by everyone to become a mature and successful one. This can lead to Pondok Madani so tight apply discipline in teaching its students.

Political values contained in the novel *Negeri 5 Menara* looks of planting certain thoughts relating to schools as an educational institution based on Islam. The author wants to show that Pondok Madani is an alternative educational that is able provide great leverage for a better change of circumstances by scoring individuals both intellectually and spiritually.

The quotation above shows that Pondok Madani is an educational institution that helped to shape the man who is both intellectual and spiritual, Pondok Madani educates its students to be a sincere personal. Ahmad Fuadi explained these things so that the reader knows the advantages of education in Pondok Madani, so eager to learn in Pondok Madani. The author would like to introduce to the reader Pondok Madani along with the advantages to be gained when he was studying at the Pondok Madani. In addition, the authors also wanted to show the reader that the schools not only teach theology or produce an individual to be religious teachers, but this schools

have graduated many great people in this country and many have made it out of the country. This is an evident from the success of the Sahibul Menara in realizing their dreams. Now they managed to be in their dream state.

Educational value in *Negeri 5 Menara* is about moral which is taught in Pondok Madani. First, the moral education towards Allah SWT, which implement everything solely for Allah.

Other educational values that can be learned from this novel is optimism in realizing the dream through effort, which is visible from the realization of the dream of all members of Sahibul Menara to be in the country of their dreams respectively.

Cultural values in the novel *Negeri 5 Menara* is the most highlighted of Minangkabau culture of Alif. Alif originated from West Sumatra, precisely in the Village Bayur, Maninjau lake. It also told about the typical food of Minang people, namely rendang. The words in Minang language also widely presented in the novel.

5. The Weakness of This Novel

After reading this novel, the reader assumes that good things also come with bad things, so does

this book. The weakness of novel *Negeri 5 Menara* is seen from the climax which has a less prominent story, so the reader feel a bit flat. When finished reading, the reader will feel the story has not finished fully. This is probably because the author based his story from a true story and did not want to make that up. Maybe it would be better if the author makes conflicts more tense or write a better ending to amaze the reader. Authors may insert dialog very careful to touch the consciousness of the reader. If this is done, this novel will inspire many more people without explanation of his moral education in our country.

6. The Analysis of Cover

The cover of this novel so interesting, so that the author felt the need to analyse the meaning behind this cover. The depiction of the looming five towers, definitely has its own meaning for this novel. The relationship between object of five towers with the story in this novel is about a dream of six students in Pondok Madani when studying. Five countries of four continents is a picture early. In addition, we can seen in details:

1. 1st Tower : Monas

Location: Indonesia, Asia.

These are icons chosen by Said and Dulmajid, they both chose Indonesia as the goal of his life, dreaming can move forward in building the motherland, Indonesia. In addition they have a clear focus after graduation from boarding school, continuing

the family business while preaching.

2. 2nd Tower : Post Office Tower/
Washington Monument

Location: Washington, America.

This is the dream of Alif, the main character in this novel. Through the stories of the great lessons of history when the world gets. Then a lot of students from all over the world study in the land of super power. Also affected by VOA, which broadcasts in the hear in Pondok Madani, making allusion to chestnut Alif can set his life on the continent's great.

3. 3rd Tower : Big Ben

Location: London, Europe

This is the dream of Raja, the character depicted is most excellent in English, very eager to explore the Kingdom of United Kingdom which once straddled the globe.

4. 4th Tower : Tower of Al-Azhar Mosque

Location: Kairo, Afrika.

This is a dream, who consider Atang that Africa is also called in the Scriptures the Abrahamic religions. further study to the University of Al-Azhar, Cairo, be the most appropriate choice for him.

5. 5th Tower : Tower of Nabawi Mosque

Location: Madinah, Afrika.

This is a dream of Baso, he also supports Atang who is prefer like Africa and Asia as a place that deserves to be explored. Medina became the best place for him continuing his dream became interfere Qur'an.

Five past the Tower, the depiction of the dreams of the six friends are becoming increasingly clear. Dream high to earn a better living. The spirit and determination that will take them through the dream come true. so, the meaning of the title "Negeri 5 Menara is five icons or marker the place and the purpose of the six fighters dream of Pondok Madani, Alif, Atang, Raja, Said, Dulmajid, and Baso.

6. Conclusion

Negeri 5 Menara, the trilogy of books written by Ahmad Fuadi. Novel *Negeri 5 Menara* has many advantages. This is an extraordinary novel, full of motivation and inspiration, tells of struggle to achieve high goals, give each other friendship and counsel, as well as describing the system of education and applied learning in Pondok Madani who upholds the discipline, honesty and responsibility. The magic word, 'Man Jadda Wajada' and 'Man Shabara Zhafira' are able to motivate the readers to achieve their goals and dreams. This novel is very interesting and inspiring. Style of language used in the novel is also very interesting. Lightweight,

descriptive and flowing, and able to enrich the vocabulary and insight into a variety of languages. In the novel there are local dialects, that are, Maninjau, Medan, Sundanese and Arab complete with footnotes at the bottom that explains the meaning of the word. Physical from the novel is also interesting. Coverage with a five-tower design and have twilight color, the illustrations is form of cottage design drawings, and bookmarks are available to add attractiveness in this novel. *Negeri 5 Menara* novel is able to enchant the reader with the passions that are transmitted in a story in this novel.

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