MORAL VALUES IN AMERICAN FOLKTALES: ‘THE FISHERMAN AND HIS WIFE’

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ABSTRACT

Lindahl (2004) states that folktales are stories told by people from generation to generation. One of the folktales that the writer discusses is The Fisherman and His Wife. This paper discusses about Moral Values in the ‘Fisherman and his Wife’. This folktale was selected as the source of the data in this study because it describes moralities. Several texts were selected for the data to determine the Moral Values in the folktale. The data were collected by reading and analyzing the folktales. There are a number of ways that one might morally educate a child. One can demonstrate various virtues and encourage the child to copy his or her own behavior. Moreover, one might tell folktales with moral lesson in order to encourage favorable behavior. Hopefully this study will give a beneficial to the readers in terms of morality from other cultures to achieve better understanding when dealing with literary texts.

Keywords: moral value, folktales

INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the moral value of the young. It deals with meaning in life through moral value in American folktales. The study draws on the morality of ordinary life performed by the main characters in the folktales.

Moral refers to generally accepted customs of conduct and right living in a society, and to the individual’s practice in relation to the morals of civilization. Moral can be pertaining to, or concerned with the principles or rules of right conduct or the distinction between right and wrong; ethical: moral attitudes. Expressing or conveying truths or counsel as to right conduct. Moral founded on the fundamental principles of right conduct rather than on legalities, enactment, or custom: moral obligations. Capable of conforming to the rules of right conduct: a moral being. It’s conforming to the rules of right conduct (opposed to immoral): a moral man. Moral teaching or practical lesson contained in a fable, tale, experience, etc.

This study is implementing folktale as the data. Folktales are a versatile source of passing down moral values. Lindahl (2004) has stated that folktales are
stories told from generation to generation; an invaluable creative material that continues a certain culture’s oral tradition. Some folktales are part make believe and part real. Folktales function the same way all over the world: a communal tradition is orally transmitted. The transmission is through its plots, characters, language and picture of life. Themes of folktales include stories for children, legendary, tall tale and jokes.

In addition, folktales may provide strategies to raise people’s awareness of the different socio-cultural rules and different concepts of politeness in given social contexts. Lindahl (2004) further stated that folktales as literature show the significance of culture in language learning for the achievement of meaningful communication and the understanding of a particular language. At the heart of all this is recognition that a foreign language learner may draw incorrect assumptions which are due to cultural misunderstanding when reading unfamiliar discourse.

American folktales have been long pervasive in the American culture. Green (2008) has stated that folktales started from the North America and encompassed the United States and Canada. The vast territorial scopes, ecological variety, ad ethnic diversity of the continent compel selective rather than comprehensive coverage of narrative traditions. The two primary divisions utilized for North America are Native American and non-Native American. Among the indigenous North American cultures are hunters and gathers, agriculturalists, mariners, small band societies, and theocracies with elaborate hierarchies. The major regions of the Northeast, the South, the Plains, the Southwest, the West, and the Northwest Coast are represented, and the locations of the groups and the lifestyles developed within these regions are presented in the head notes to individual tales.

To comprehend folktales, one should possess sufficient linguistic, rhetorical, and cultural knowledge as suggested by Wolfram (2007). It is because folktales are literary genre characterized by heavy use of dialogue (folktales are based on oral tradition). Understanding those dialogues is dependent upon principal of language use commonly consigned to the level of pragmatic, and in particular of socio-pragmatics.
Based on those explanation above, this paper would like to describe the moral value in American Folktales ‘The Fisherman and His Wife’

DISCUSSION

A folktale may be defined as a traditional oral prose narrative (http://dictionary.reference.com). Like other kinds of folklore, the folktale circulates by word of mouth in a consistent yet shifting form; since each new teller does not read from or recite a fixed text, the words are constantly being altered to some degree. If a collector records and prints a tale in a book, it becomes merely a printed version of a folktale, lacking the intonation, inflection, gestures, facial expressions, and audience responses that make the narrating of a folktale a living performance. A writer’s paraphrase or embellishment of a folktale he or she has heard is a literary version of the folktale, considerably removed from the original and authentic oral version. A story that is told only once does not qualify as a folktale because, although oral, it is not traditional. The length, subject matter, and form of folktales vary enormously. A one-minute joke and an adventure-laden romance requiring several nights to narrate can both be characterized as folktales, if they exist in oral variants. Lewis (1995) cited that storytelling is a basic human need, folktales are told even in the midst of technological cultures saturated with electronic media. Modern Americans specialize in snappy jokes with punch line endings and urban horror legends that are told as true.

Regarding the origins of folktales, some scholars believe that in ancient times all members of society shared folktales. Most ancient people lived in rural communities. Through the centuries, large numbers of people moved to cities and gradually lost touch with so-called "authentic" folk traditions. According to scholars in the 1800s, these traditions were preserved by uneducated peasants called "folk", whose way of life had changed little for hundreds of years. Two German brothers, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, were among the leading folklore scholars. From 1807-1814, they started to collect folktales from peasants who lived near Kassel, Germany. They believed that by collecting these tales, they
were preserving the heritage of German storytelling. Their collection later became
known as *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, illustrating how folktales and fairy tales are terms
that are often used interchangeably.

Folktale is also defined as "all forms of prose narrative, written or oral,
which have come to be handed down through the years". Like other kinds of
literature, folktale can be seen as a mirror of society; it also has a function to
educate people indirectly. It has five main functions: to be a mirror of the culture,
to validate aspects of the culture, to educate, to encourage cultural norms, and
help people fulfill their dreams. Besides these, folktales can cultivate the
aesthetics of young people's minds through the exploits of heroes in the stories
and its philosophy (Teri Yamada, Folktale notes: 2002).

Today, scholars usually consider "folk" to be a group of people who share
at least one common linking factor. Some scholars believe that even a family can
be considered "folk" because many families have their own traditions and stories.
Folktales occur as these are passed from person to person. Scholars believe that
folktales existed in all rural communities and have been transmitted orally from
one generation to the next over a long period of time.

To be a true folktale, a story must have its origins in what we call the oral
tradition. This means the story was first passed down orally by storytellers.
Along the way it may have had things added or subtracted as each storyteller
made it his or her own. It eventually was written down, which is why we're able
to read it in a book now, but it wasn't written down first. For example, Paul
Bunyan reads like a folktale and has many folktale elements in it, but it is not a
true folktale because it was a written story to begin with and not something passed
down through the generations orally. Folktales are instructive. They caution
readers/listeners about the consequences of certain kinds of behaviors or attitudes.
Characters are not complex. Instead they are stereotypes: the thief, the liar, the
clever youth, the evil stepmother, etc. Even when written down, they are
sometimes told in a way that sounds like the spoken word: directly addressing the
reader, use of dialect or slang, etc.
The structure may be repetitive. Things that happen in threes are common. Repetition of lines is also common and would have been helpful to whoever was memorizing and telling a story in the oral tradition.

**American Folktales**

In general, folktale narration is a cultural form in all countries. Oral narration provides amusement and comfort to listeners in a simple way. This means that most people have probably experienced the telling of folktales. When one society has communication links with other countries, oral folktale narration also migrates to those countries. One society will narrate folktales to another and vice versa. The narrators receive the folktales from their partners for narration in their own countries as well (Ibid: 2000, p. 56). In this way, previous generations have been transferring these stories from generation to generation to the present time. Generally, folktales have been transferred via the oral form to written texts Vichea (1999:11). In Pali the word "oral" is *mukhabadha*. The relation between oral and written folktale is explained by PrakKhorg's graph which comes from an idea developed by Stith Thompson, illustrating how the written form developed from the oral, and in turn an oral form can develop from a written one PrakKhorg (2000:58)

As Stith Thompson expressed in *The Folktale* every society has an oral folktale tradition that includes a narrator and an audience. The stories that were narrated could be stories of recent events, or oral narration that came from the ancient memories of the older generations. Male and female, old and young are fascinated when listening to these stories. Listening to the narrations entertained or relaxed the listeners after the hard work of everyday life, allowing them to recognize the characters’ behavior in the stories, and to practice religious beliefs in their own way.

There are many geographical areas and particular occasions around the telling of stories. Oral narration appears in the villages of Central America, on the boats of the Mediterranean, in the deserts of Australia, in the Hawaiian Islands, in the jungles of Brazil, and in the igloos of the Eskimo. Thompson (1977). Some storytelling occurs during rituals, or as performance art. Linda Degh, Makenson,
Langstrof and Ratoromans investigators into the occasions of telling stories in communities, claimed that the telling of stories happened when people were farming in the fields, sewing clothes, during the winter season when people found it hard to work outside, and in any place where people were limited, such as in a hospital or a prison PrakKhorng (1999: 71).

Oral folktale narration has appeared at every level of society. It includes the court, and the high officials down to the grassroots level. The majority of narrators have been female. In Europe, there were and are many professional storytellers who learnt this skill as a career to earn a living. These are the professional storytellers. Storytellers could be based at court, while others lived out in the communities. Narrators in rural communities are usually people from the lower classes, the peasantry, who often do not have much time to see people or tell stories to them. Among some groups, a careful distinction is made as to the kind of tales proper for certain occasions Thompson (1977:454). Some may be told only by women, others only by men, some are told by initiates or those with special learning. Among some American Indians, stories may be told only in the winter (Ibid: 1977:453). Some stories however became traditional so that everyone in the village could narrate them.

As for the development of modern technology, the traditional oral transmission of folktales has also changed its form, from the oral to the written, and is now being changed by electronic media such as CDs, telephone, or e-mail. There are now more places for transmitting stories: within the family, on an airplane, in a tour bus, at a café, Internet shop, on the boat, etc.

**Moral Theory**

Based on “Webster New World Dictionary of American Language”, Moral is thing that related with skill to decide right and wrong of behavior that accepted by citizen. In “Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia” it is said moral is deciding good or bad considered behavior. Morality according to Bentham is art to maximize happiness; it can be seen by achieving the existence of happy and joyful life of all people. (Hazlitt, 2003:109). A morality is sacrifice from little goodness to big goodness. (Hazlitt,2003:111).
William James Earle states that in contemporary English, the words moral /ˈmɜːrəl/ derive from the Greek “Ethos” meaning usage, character, personal disposition and tendency. Morality and moral derive from the Latin mores, meaning custom, manner, and character (Earle:1992:178). Adhering to conventionally accepted standards of conduct. Moral also based on a sense of right and wrong according to conscience: moral courage, moral law. Moral supports having the effects but not the appearance of (victory or defeat): a moral victory, a moral defeat. According to Sternberg (1994:938) “morality refers to concern with is good or right in people relationship with each other. It is to be specific about definitions of good (or bad) and right (or wrong), since the term can be judges by standards such as efficiency or showing careful when makes judgments or decisions.” A key to understand morality is to be specific about definition of good or bad and right or wrong”. From the statement morality contains beliefs about the nature of human, beliefs about the nature of human, beliefs about ideals, about what is good or desirable or worthy or pursuit for its own sake, rules lying down what ought to be done and motives that incline us to choose the right or the wrong course.

A morality contains (1) beliefs about the nature of the man, (2) belief about ideals, about what is good or desirable or worthy or pursuit for its own sake, (3)rules laying down what ought to be done and (4) motives that incline us to choose the right or the wrong course. We learn as children that we should be unselfish, that we should not tell lies. (Edwards: 1967:150).

Moral rules are not rules for achieving ideal ends, dependent for their validity for their success or failure in bringing about the sends’, but are worthy of obedience in their own right, and amoral system is a system of rules in which some rules are regarded as depend on other. For example the rule that someone ought to keep promises and the rule that one should not to kill is a special case of the most general rule that one must not to do injury toward others.

Moral is concern both behavior and character, they arise when life presents people with such questions as “what should I do (or not do)?”, “how should I act?”, “what kind of person that should I be?” moral is in escapable and
they come in all shapes and size. (Barcalow, 1994:3)

According to Carol K. Sigelman (1995:330), the term moral implies an ability they are (1) to distinguish right from wrong, (2) to act on this distinction, and (3) to experience pride when one does the right thing and guilt or shame when one does not. Carol K. Sigelman, also stated that there are three basic components of morality. They are:

a. An affective or emotional component
   An affective or emotional component contains the feelings of guilt concern for other feelings that surround right or wrong actions and that motivate thoughts and actions.

b. A cognitive component
   A cognitive component focuses on the way we conceptualize right and wrong and make decisions about how to behave.

c. A behavioral component
   A behavioral component reflects how we actually behave when for example we do or have something that we know is bad or wrong, or help a needy person.

**Moral Value**

Moral values are one basis on which we make decisions—right or wrong? Good or evil? Other bases are financial, convenient, aesthetic (an artist), arbitrary (flipping a coin), physical/health, rational (investigating a product before buying). Individual morality and social morality this provides the basis of decisions of and judgments by the individual: honesty, loyalty, good faith, being responsible. Social morality, fairness is one basis of law, which helps to govern society and to control individual behavior. Social morality considers whether an action threatens society’s well-being.

Moral value is value that must be separated with other values. Every value will get quality if it has relation with other values. Loyalty is moral value, but it must be applied with other, humanity value for general, for example, love of husband and wife. (Bertens: 2000, 142). Then, there are four characteristic of
moral value. There are as follows:

a. Moral value is related with responsibility
   Moral value is related with human personality, but beside moral value we also automatically can say other values. Moral value makes people wrong or not, because he/she has responsibility. Especially moral value is related with human personality of responsibility. Moral value just can be real in action wholly if it became responsibility of the involved person.

b. Moral value is related with pure heart
   All values need to make it real. Because it has persuasive power, it should be practice. For example, aesthetic value, it should be practiced, play music composition or others. After that the result of it, painting want to be showed, and music want to be listened. To make moral value to be real, it can be appealed from pure heart. One of special characteristics of moral values is this value will effect voice of pure heart to accuse us if oppose moral value and praise us if make moral value.

c. Obligation
   Moral value obligates us absolutely and it can’t be compromised. Other values need to be real and admitted, for example, aesthetic value. Educative and cultural person will admit and enjoying aesthetic value. But indifferent people can’t we blame. Moral value obligates us as such, without requirement. For example, honesty orders us to return thing that borrowed, like or not, because moral value contains an imperative category. In other value for example, if badminton player want to be champion, he/she must try hard. It’s a must to be champion, but there is a limitation.

d. Formality
   Moral value is not stand-alone without other value. Although moral value is top value that we must appreciate, but it is not in top without other value. Moral values did not separate with other values. For example, a seller applies moral values all at once with apply economic values. Moral values are nothing without other values. It is form of formality. (Bertens, 2000: 143-147)
Many spiritual values or we can mention with moral values that can be learned by all people. And this is universal values. There are love and affection, honesty, responsibility, perseverance, integrity, harmony, patience, bravery, justice, simplicity, peaceful, etc. (Buzan, 2003:28)

DISCUSSION

Long time ago, they were a fisherman and his wife who lived in a miserable little hut near the sea. One day, when he was fishing, the fisherman caught a big fish who actually was an enchanted prince. The fish begged to stay alive. The fisherman kindly released it and went home. His wife asked what was he got at that day and then she heard the story about the fish from the man. She ordered that he should ask a wish to the fish. She told him went back and asked a small cottage to the fish. He returned to the sea and made a rhyme to call the flounder. The fish granted her request. However, the wife became greedy and made too much demands. After she got a cottage she wanted a castle. She also wanted to be a king. Then she ordered to be an emperor and finally became a pope. The fisherman knew it was wrong but he could not refuse her. The fish always granted her wishes, but the sea grew increasingly stormy every time the fisherman went to call the fish. Eventually the woman was too far when she wished to be a God. The fish took everything that it has been granted. Then the fish told the fisherman to go home because they would find their little hut again. The fisherman and his wife were back living in their little hut.

Moral of the Story

*The fisherman ask for a comfortable house*

“Did you not ask it for anything?” said the wife.

“No,” replied the man. “What should I ask for?”

“What should you ask for!” exclaimed the wife. “You talk as if we had everything we want, but see how wretchedly we live in this dark little hut. Do go back and tell the fish we want a comfortable house.”
The fisherman did not like to undertake such an errand. However, as his wife had bidden him to go, he went; and when he came to the sea the water looked all yellow and green. He stood on the rocks where he had fished and said,

“Oh, man of the sea!
Come listen to me;
For Alice my wife,
The plague of my life,
Hath sent me to beg a gift of thee!”

Then the fish came swimming to him and said, “Well, what does she want?”
“Ah,” answered the fisherman, “my wife says that when I had caught you I ought to have asked you for something before I let you go. She does not like living any longer in our little hut. She wants a comfortable house.”
“Go home then,” said the fish. “She is in the house she wants already.”

Moral of the story is be kind to others and good things come your way. When we help someone or something do not ask about what he/she will give us. We should not to be too greedy. What begins as a desire to better her condition leads the woman in the story down a trail on which she becomes greedier and greedier.

**The fisherman asks for a castle**

“Husband, there is not enough room in this house, and the yard and garden are a great deal smaller than they ought to be. I would like to have a large stone castle to live in. So go to the fish again and tell him to give us a castle.”

“Wife,” said the fisherman, “I don’t like to go him again, for perhaps he will be angry. We ought to be content with a good house like this.”

“Nonsense!” said the wife. “He will give us a castle very willingly. Go along and try.”

The fisherman went, but his heart was heavy, and when he came to the sea the water was a dark gray color and looked very gloomy. He stood on the rocks at the water’s edge and said,

“Oh, man of the sea!
Come listen to me;
For Alice my wife,
The plague of my life,
Hath sent me to beg a gift of thee!"

Then the fish came swimming to him and said, “Well, what does she want now?”
“Ah,” replied the man very sorrowfully, “my wife wants to live in a stone castle.”
“Go home then,” said the fish. “She is at the castle already.”

The moral is that we should be grateful for what we get. Also, being given something without working for it can lead to insatiable greed. The fishermen shouldn't have kept asking for more and he should have just refused to do something that wasn't right.

**The fisherman asks for his wife to be a king**

The next morning when they awoke it was broad daylight, and the wife jogged the fisherman with her elbow and said, “Get up, husband; bestir yourself, for we must be king and queen of all the land.”

“Wife, wife,” said the man, “why should we wish to be king and queen? I would not be king even if I could be.”

“Well, I will be queen, anyway,” said the wife. “Say no more about it; but go to the fish and tell him what I want.”

So the man went, but he felt very sad to think that his wife should want to be queen. The sea was muddy and streaked with foam as he cried out.

“Oh man of the sea!
Come listen to me;
For Alice my wife.
The Plague of my life,
Hath sent me to beg a gift of thee!”

Then the fish came swimming to him and said, “Well, what would she have now?”

“Alas!,” said the man. “My wife wants to be queen.”

“Go home, “ said the fish. “She is queen already.”

Throughout the story, every time the fishermen went to the fish, the seas would get darker and harsher. That meant that the fish was getting angrier. But also notice how the fish wasn't surprised that the fishermen would come to see him. That's because the fish knew that eventually the fishermen would ask for too
much. Moral of the story is that a person must be thankful for what he has and not always want more.

_The fisherman asks for his wife to be a pope_

“Well, wife,” said the fisherman, “are you queen?”

“Yes, “ she replied, “ I am queen.”

When he had looked at her for a long time he said, “Ah, wife, what a fine think it is to be queen! Now we shall never have anything more to wish for.”

“I don’t know how that maybe, “ said he. “Never is a long time. I am queen, ‘tis true, but I begin to be tired of it. I think I would like to be pope next.”

“Oh, wife, wife!, the man exclaimed. “How can you be pope? There is but one pope at time in Christendom.”

“Husband,” said she, “I will be pope this everyday.”

“Ah, wife,” responded the fisherman. “The fish cannot make you Pope and I will not like to ask for such a thing.”

“What nonsense!” said she. If he can make a queen, he can make a pope. Go and try.”

So the fisherman went, and when he came to the shore the wind was raging and the waves were dashing on the rocks most fearfully, and the sky was dark with flying clouds. The fisherman was frightened, but nevertheless he obeyed his wife and called out,

‘Oh, man of the sea!
Come listen to me;
For Alice my wife,
The plague of my life,
Hath sent me to beg a gift of thee!”

Then the fish came swimming to him and said, “What does she want this time?”

“Ah,” said the fisherman, “my wife wants to be pope,”

“Go home,” commanded the fish, “She is pope already.

The moral was not to get overly greedy and to value what you have, no matter how little it is. Those who do not appreciate the small things likely do not have the capacity to appreciate anything and are destined to live a life deprived of joy.
The fisherman asks for his wife to be the Lord over the sun and moon

At last morning came and the sun rose. “Ha!” cried she. “I was about to sleep, had not the sun disturbed me with its bright light. Cannot I prevent the sun rising?” and she became very angry and said to her husband. “Go to the fish and tell him I want to be Lord of the sun and the moon.” “Alas, wife,” said he, “can you not be content to be pope?” “No,” said she, “I am very uneasy, and cannot bear to see the sun and moon rise without my leave. Go to the fish at once!”

The man went, and as he approached the shore a dreadful storm arose so that the trees and rocks shook, and the sky grew black, and the lightning flashed, and the thunder rolled, and the sea was covered with vast waves like mountains. The fisherman trembled so that his knees knocked together, and he had hardly strength in the gale while he called to the fish:

‘Oh, man of the sea!
Come listen to me;
For Alice my wife,
The plague of my life,
Hath sent me to beg a gift of thee!’

Then the fish came swimming to him and said, “What more does she want?” “Ah,” said the man, “she wants to be the lord of the sun and moon.” “Go home to your hut again,” said the fish.

At the end, when the fish said to go back to his little hut, was because the fish was punishing the fishermen and his wife and therefore taking away everything he had given to them. The fishermen shouldn't have kept asking for more and he should have just refused to do something that wasn't right. The moral of the story would be not to be too greedy or we will end up with nothing. If we want too much, we may end up with nothing. The woman's last desire to be like God places her back in her little hut. Most people do not realize that a desire to be like God should be a desire for lowliness.
CONCLUSION

Moral values is important to human life. It should be introduced to the children early in order to comprehend the good and wrong behavior. From the above discussion, it can be shared the conclusions that we should not be greedy and it carries a warning not to be greedy. We should also be grateful for what we have already got. In addition, we also have to remember where we came from so we do not become people who forget themselves and where they came from.

REFERENCES