



# Values of Love, Faith, and Discipline in Indonesian Children's Poetry

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## ABSTRACT

This study seeks to explore the values of love, faith, and discipline embedded in *Malaikat Kecil* (Little Angel), a collection of poems by Eko Sutiyono intended for young readers, especially since the author is a primary school teacher. The poems in this book seek to offer a reflection of the approach to poetic texts in the context of children's education through cultural and religious morality rooted in Indonesian tradition. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, this study seeks to identify how poetic elements are used to convey character-building values in a way that is easily understood by young readers. The findings of this study indicate that these poems package fundamental aspects of moral education through imagery, word choice, and narrative voice that are appropriate for children's understanding. The values embedded in these poems are not only conveyed through themes but also through repetition, simplicity, and rhythm, making poetry a powerful medium for the internalization of values. This study aims to contribute to children's literary criticism and demonstrate how literary texts can support character education.

**Keywords:** children's poetry, character values, discipline, faith, love

## Introduction

Children's poetry plays an important role in instilling character values in humans from an early age. Children's poetry is part of children's literature, in which it serves as

▪ both an aesthetic and educational medium that shapes a child's personality through the power of language, imaginative structures, and affective experiences that are then embedded in a child's mind and heart. In the context of Eko Sutiyo's book of poetry, *Malaikat Kecil* (Little Angel), poetry is at least one form of children's literature that strives to instill the values of love, faith, and discipline in the daily lives of children.

Children's poetry should be a form of literature that is rich in value and easily accessible to a wide audience, as well as important for building and developing children's character. As Turahmat et al. (2024:220) point out, poetry serves as both a space and a form that is sufficiently appealing to anyone. Today, poetry is no longer confined to dusty library books but has flooded social media channels. This demonstrates that everyone is now present and engaged in the world of poetry.

Indonesian children's poetry is rich in aesthetic expression and full of assertive language. As Safitri et al. (2024:197) state, poetry is a record of the author's thoughts, packaged and written in an attractive form that is always connected to the author's mood, so that the resulting work is beautiful.

Children's literature, including poetry, has the power to shape character and values. This was revealed by Purnamasari, et al. (2021), who stated that literature, apart from being a record of the times, is also considered one of the solutions to improving the character of Indonesian children. Literature can foster critical thinking in addressing various life issues.

In a broader context, research on children's literature—particularly children's poetry—has evolved to examine the role of literature in shaping identity, morality, and national values (Hunt, 2009; Nikolajeva, 2014). However, in terms of the study of children's literature, especially children's poetry in Indonesia, it is still relatively limited or not yet widely studied, especially in terms of in-depth research on the character values offered in poetry texts.

As stated by Andrian (2018:210), poets use rhetorical devices as a means of expressing all their ideas, thoughts, and anxieties in a poem. In the context of this study, children's poetry can also be a medium for the acculturation of values that children are concerned about.

Therefore, research on Eko Sutiyo's poetry book *Malaikat Kecil* (Little Angel) is important to consider the existing gaps. This research attempts to provide an analysis of the values of love (affection), faith (spirituality), and discipline (ethics of life) in the book *Malaikat Kecil*. This research also seeks to show that Indonesian children's poetry has values that can shape character and express local wisdom through a distinctive language style that is easy for children to understand and rich in meaning, which is necessary to strengthen the process of children's growth and development.

In this case, it is related to how culture is interpreted as part of collective values, which in the context of this study proves that children's poetry in Indonesia often contains local values, such as the spiritual and cultural values of certain communities. For example, in the poetry book *Malaikat Kecil*, it reflects how the values of discipline and respect for parents or ancestors can be linked to the values reflected in Javanese traditions, as expressed by Pratasari et al. (2023), traditions are human creations or products of humans because they are created from human behavior that establishes agreements without coercion.

## Methods

This study uses a qualitative-descriptive approach with content analysis of the poems in Eko Sutiyono's book *Malaikat Kecil*. The primary data in this study consists of all the poems in the poetry collection, which were analyzed using intensive reading techniques and marking of diction, style, theme, and moral values contained therein.

The analysis steps include: (1) identifying poems that explicitly and implicitly contain values of love, faith, and discipline; (2) classifying values based on thematic and stylistic contexts; (3) interpretation of meaning based on the approach of children's literature theory and character values (Lickona, 1992; Nurgiyantoro, 2005); and (4) reflection on the possibility of implementing these values in children's learning or character education.

In this case, to reinforce the position of faith and love as part of the prophetic spirit in children's literature in the study of Eko Sutiyono's poetry collection *Malaikat Kecil*, the prophetic literary ethical values referred to in the study by Turahmat et al. (2024:224), stating that prophetic literary ethics in Ahmadun Yosi Herfanda's poetry are derived from three principles: (1) transcendental structuralist epistemology, (2) literature as worship, and (3) inter-consciousness relations. As intended by Andrian (2018:209), poetry exists as a system of signs (second-level semiotics) that uses language as a medium (first-level semiotics). Poetry (including children's poetry) contains a complex system of meaning.

Therefore, for Purnamasari et al. (2021), the use of children's poetry as a medium for character education in the classroom allows poetry to be used as teaching material in Indonesian Language and Literature lessons. This is related to the moral values conveyed in poetry, which mostly use indirect message delivery.

## Findings and Discussion

Children's poetry serves as a means of documenting culture, and in this context, it is important to emphasize that children's poetry also functions as a documentation of cultural and social values. As Pratasari et al. (2023) point out, literary works are reflections of human life, in the sense that culture is inherent in human existence.

At the very least, the presence of Eko Sutiyono's poetry book *Malaikat Kecil* (Little Angel) offers a unique appeal to children's poetry. In this case, it is not only the theme that matters, but also how the depth of emotion and moral values are conveyed in a distinctive way through the choice of words and imagery. This contrasts with findings regarding the existence of poetry texts that are currently faced with poems that can be created using AI. These findings, presented by Andrian and Ripai (2024), suggest that poems generated by AI tend to be "emotionally dry" and have not yet been able to match the aesthetic achievements of human poetry.

Therefore, the poetry book *Malaikat Kecil* offers a unique approach in terms of the simplicity of poetry texts for children. The book consists of dozens of short poems with simple diction, lyrical rhythm, and strong imagery suitable for young readers. The three main values that emerge dominantly are as follows.

## 1. The Value of Love

Children's poetry also uses rhetorical devices to instill values emotionally, namely through the use of hyperbole or enumeration. This is evident in Andrian's research (2018:208), which states that rhetorical devices are poetic tools that represent the poet's tricks of the mind. Through these devices, the poet seeks to capture the reader's attention, stimulate their thoughts, and encourage them to reflect on what the poet conveys in their poems.

In this regard, the value of love is closely related to a person's emotions. Emotions are very important in the values of love, because emotions can be considered part of the value of love. In this case, love is at least intended as a form of affection for others, family, and other living beings, which is the main theme in many poems.

This is evident in the excerpts from the poems "Mother," "My Sister," and "My Brother's Glass." In these three poems, the warm relationships and empathy cultivated and developed within the family are depicted, showing how such warmth is built within the family environment. These poem excerpts are represented in the following sections of the poem.

"My brother likes to see me cry, because he can give me water from his own glass."  
(My Brother's Glass).

In this excerpt from the poem, it is evident how the instillation of values is not only present and manifested in the content, but also skillfully embodied through repetition and a gentle, soothing tone. This aligns with the affective function of children's poetry as presented in the poems collected in Eko Sutyono's book *Malaikan Kecil*.

In terms of the use of metaphors in children's poetry, in terms of symbolism and noble values in poetry that imply love, trust, or a sense of responsibility. As Pratasari (2023) states, culture is symbolic, which is an expression or manifestation of human presence.

## 2. Faith Value

Faith in children's poetry, as presented in Eko Sutyono's *Malaikat Kecil* (Little Angel) poems, is not merely expressed dogmatically, but through symbols and daily activities that imply a spiritual connection. The poetic texts, both explicitly and implicitly, seek to convey religious, social, and personal values, including love, faith, and discipline.

As concluded in the research by Purnamasari et al. (2021), several values are identified: (1) Moral values in the relationship between humans and God, such as worship, faith, seeking God, and remembering death. (2) Moral values in the relationship between humans and the environment and social community, such as not forgetting history and culture, tolerance, love for the homeland, and parental love for children. (3) Moral values in the relationship between humans and themselves, namely loyalty and patience.

In the context of the poems "Little Angel" and "Prayer," the presence of God, angels, and prayer becomes part of children's daily lives. As seen in the following excerpt from the poem.

"I close my eyes and imagine a little angel smiling on my pillow." (Little Angel).

These poems, especially the excerpt above, emphasize the importance of prayer, gratitude, and surrender, as well as how religious values are internalized in children's lives.

- In this case, it is intended that literary works express spiritual values. In this context, it is clear in the children's poems from the poetry book *Little Angel* by Eko Sutyono, especially the poems that describe surrender to God, obedience in worship, or the consistency of children in praying and doing good deeds. As revealed by Turahmat et al. (2024:225–226), the poems written by Ahmadun Yosi Herfanda show how humans try to establish a relationship with God through symbols of simplicity and modesty. In the poem “Doa Rumput,” for example, he presents an image of unwavering faith through the symbol of grass that continues to worship despite being destroyed.

This is in line with the process of value inheritance, which in this context means that children's poetry serves as a means of conveying values from one generation to the next. According to Pratasari (2023), traditions passed down to descendants or subsequent generations are evidenced by the continued use and development of traditions even as times change.

### 3. Discipline Values

In this study, the value of discipline is expressed through poems that describe routines, responsibilities, and obedience to rules. For example, the poem “Jam Dinding” (Wall Clock) describes time as a regulator of children's activities that must be respected.

“The clock ticks / reminding me to study / and stop playing.” (Wall Clock).

From this excerpt, the value of discipline is instilled not as a heavy obligation, but as part of life that can be lived joyfully.

According to Andrian (2018:208), this demonstrates a rhetorical device that creates poetic tension, as readers must consider the effects it produces. It can also be understood that children's poetry is not always simple, but can involve deep reading.

The rhetorical devices in question are dominant in children's poetry, including hyperbole, enumeration, and repetitive language, which stir the emotions and imagination of young readers or children. All of this is evident and directly related to what is revealed in the poems in Eko Sutyono's poetry book *Malaikat Kecil* (Little Angel), for example in the poems “Senyum Bunda” (Mother's Smile), “Bangun Pagi” (Waking Up in the Morning), or “Dongeng Sebelum Tidur” (Bedtime Story).

### Conclusion

The book *Malaikat Kecil* (Little Angel) by Eko Sutyono is an example of Indonesian children's poetry that is rich in values of love, faith, and discipline. For Purnamasari, et al. (2021), poetry certainly also conveys universal values through its verses. In terms of moral values, for example, in literary works, these values reflect the author's outlook on life. These views take the form of values of truth, and it is these values that the author wishes to convey to readers.

The values presented in Eko Sutyono's book are conveyed through simple language, powerful imagery, and a poetic structure that is close to the everyday lives of children. In addition to being part of children's literature, this book has an educational function in shaping children's character from an early age.

This study seeks to offer substantial recommendations regarding the utilization of children's poetry as an effective and meaningful medium for character education in elementary schools. It emphasizes how poetry can be used not only to nurture moral

▪development but also to shape emotional intelligence and cultural sensitivity from an early age. Moreover, this research highlights the urgency of developing children's literature that upholds local wisdom, spiritual depth, and moral clarity—delivered through aesthetic choices that are both imaginative and communicative. In addition, future studies are encouraged to broaden the thematic scope by incorporating issues related to national identity, environmental awareness, multiculturalism, and inclusivity. Such directions will further strengthen the role of children's poetry as a pedagogical tool that speaks to the holistic development of young readers in a rapidly changing world.

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