

# THE INNER JOURNEY OF DENIAS TO GET EDUCATION IN *DENIAS, SENANDUNG DI ATAS AWAN*

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## **ABSTRACT:**

The first education themed Indonesian movie during Indonesian film industry history is exposed in, *Denias, Senandung di Atas Awan*. This film presents a struggle of a boy, Denias, in pursuing his dream to achieve a better education and through this movie he is also recognized as a hero. Moreover, in order to help my pursuit in answering my statement of the problem, I applied Christopher Vogler's theory which is the Character Arc. Thus, in the end of this study, I can conclude that a common boy can also be recognized as a hero because he has a great effort. This effort can be seen through his (Denias') inner journey that leads him to be an educated person.

Keywords: Hero's Inner Journey, Character Arc, Educated person.

An Indonesian drama, *Denias, Senandung di Atas Awan*, is a movie that mainly focuses on an Indonesian education issue. This movie portrays the life of a boy named Denias. Denias is a boy who really wants to study, but because of the poor condition of the school and the absence of teachers, it is impossible for Denias to study and receive proper education. Moreover, his father also demands him only to work in the field rather than to go and study in school. Despite his father's discouragement, Denias is still supported by his mother and teachers who always encourages him to study. After his mother's death in a fire accident and his teacher's departure from the village, Denias decides to go to the city to find a school where he can study. In order to find the school, He had to walk for days through the savannas, valleys, and forests to reach the city. Finally he was able find the school after going through several hardships. This movie shows the personal effort of a little boy who wants to change his life and break the society's perception about education.

From the beginning of the story, it is shown that the village where Denias lives really values and appreciates the traditional views and norms. The society where Denias lives has a strong culture and misperception about education. Most people in Denias' village consider education as something that is unimportant except Denias' mother. This can be seen from their habits in which they do not support their children's schooling and education. They prefer their children to work in the fields. The perception of a successful child according to Denias' village folks is that successful children are those who help their parents in the field and not those who leave their parents for education. Alternatively, the parents think that education will waste their children's time. It is considered unimportant for children to finish their education. If they (the children) want to help their parents they can do it by working in the fields. However, after some conflicts happened in Denias' life, Denias break those perceptions and build his future through education. Beyond this, it can be assumed that it is interesting to study whether his outer journey can reveal his inner journey. Thus, the way to make this journal being more comprehensible is through the reasons why the subject is chosen, how to analyze, and to conclude it.

Firstly, this film became interesting in Indonesian Industry because in 2005, Garin Nugroho, one of Indonesian best directors commented on Indonesian film quality, that Indonesian films are no longer interesting and getting decreasing in quality. This reality happens because there were not so many innovations in term of themes. Indonesian films more deal with ghost stories and teenager relationship, so the audience can easily predict the plot of film (Suara Merdeka. Com, 2005). So, it can be said that, Indonesian dramas were also having the same status. Surprisingly, in 2006, Indonesian dramas created a new story. Some Indonesian dramas could step on international events and got some achievements. One of Indonesian dramas, which had education as a theme was *Denias, Senandung di Atas Awan*. It was noted that, during 2006 to 2008, this film won numerous awards. Those achievements did not come only from national and international independent organizations

but also government institutions. At that time, there was only a few of Indonesian dramas that finally could attract governments' attention in which this drama was included.

Due to the reasons above, it is interesting to analyze how the inner journey of Denias is revealed and how this can lead him to be an educated person. Because, when I analyzed Denias' inner process I had found that not only people who have an incredible physical and intellectual feat who can be heroes but also average individuals who comes from bad situations. The word hero can be described as someone who not only has a strong body but also has strong mind. As stated in a quote "heroes are ordinary people who achieve extraordinary feats". People can do great and incredible acts such as saving others, their family, or the community. For example, our parents, they are heroes because they have worked hard to fulfill the family's need. Another example of heroes are the teachers, they are heroes because they have an important role in creating a brighter future for every generation. As in the case of *Denias, Senandung di Atas Awan*, I found that, Denias, a common boy who has no strengths and abilities but with great effort, he can be a hero. Denias can complete an impossible mission that seems only people who has strong physics can do. In fact, Denias is just a common boy who does not care about the risks that can happen along his journey to reach his dreams. Even though, he goes through several obstacles but in the end he survives, then his inner heroic's effort leads him to be an educated person.

Secondly, the way to analyze this study, I chose to use Christopher Vogler's Character Arc. Character Arc can explain how the hero's inner action is revealed. According to Vogler, Character Arc is a term used to describe the gradual stages of change in a character: the stage and turning points of growth in the hero's inner journey. A common mistake in stories is that writers often make heroes grow or change, but do so suddenly in a single leap because of a single incident. However, Vogler emphasized that it is more common for people to change by degrees, as it can be happen to the hero in his journey (Vogler, 2007, p. 83). Another proof as the way to show that Character Arc is the hero's inner journey is the hero's Journey which is a representation that functions to the hero's outer journey. According to Julie Koh, "Corresponding with the outer journey is the Hero's Inner Journey Character Arc is known as the inner journey concept of the hero's journey (Julie, 2011). Moreover, Vogler has given Character Arc twelve stages which are divided into three acts. Then, to make this analysis becomes more comprehensible; I applied Act I, II, and III of the Character Arc to this analysis. In this analysis, I decided to use the Act I as the hero's departure, Act II as the hero's inner process, and the Act III as the hero's perseverance to maintain his goal.

Furthermore, Vogler has grouped the first five stages of the Character Arc into the first Act in order to reveal the hero's Act I (As the hero's departure in my analysis). This stage includes five stages; Limited Awareness of a Problem, Increased Awareness, Reluctant to Change, Overcoming the Reluctance, and Committing to Change. Furthermore,

For Act II, Vogler classified four stages to reveal it. Those four stages are: Experimenting with First Change, Preparing for the Big Change, Attempting the Big Change, the Consequences of the Attempt (Improvements and Setbacks). As a way to make the theory fit and suitable to the analysis, I decided to use Act II as the hero's inner process in pursuing his goal.

In Act III, there will be some ways that show how hero's perseverance in maintaining his goal. Will he keep going through the process or give up his journey is an important decision to achieve his goal. This Act includes stages; Rededication to change, Final Attempt at Big Change, and Mastery of the Problem.

Thus, I am going to use inner journey concept, Character Arc by Christopher Vogler to reveal the hero's inner journey in my analysis. The hero will start a journey because of his limited understanding and he ought to change his attitude towards his goal. When the hero realizes the way to change his attitude towards his goal, he ought to go for a journey because the real goal actually is in another place. Then, the hero has a certainty to pursue his goal and goes through some inner processes to achieve his goal. In the end, whether the hero already achieves or still trying to achieve his goal; he must have perseverance to continue his effort as the way he deserves to achieve the goal.

## **THE INNER JOURNEY OF DENIAS TO GET EDUCATION**

In this part, I have revealed the process of Denias' inner journey to get education. Also, specifically, I have divided them into three main parts, including; Denias' departure to pursue his

education, Denias' inner process in getting education, and Denias' perseverance to maintain his effort to get education.

### **Denias' Departure to Pursue His Education**

As well as the theory had been applied, I tried to reveal Denias' departure. On the first stage of Character Arc of the First Act, I found that Denias goes through the first stage of Character Arc's which is Limited Understanding of a Problem. When Denias is asked by his mother to attend the school, he really does it. However, Denias' action to attend the school is seen only as a formality. He attends the school without knowing the main purpose of attending the school. His limited understanding about education in this movie can be seen from some of his actions; he (Denias) does not provide time to learn at home and leaves the class whenever he wants at school. These examples can be used to explain Denias's limited understanding about education, which is known as the way he undergoes the first stage of his departure.

Furthermore, after going through the first stage, Denias goes through the second stage of the Character Arc which is Increased Awareness. On this stage, I found that this stage does not only strengthen the previous stage by providing more supporting evidence, but also shows the consequences of his previous actions from which he learns to increase his (Denias) understanding about education. Because of his limited understanding, he is then advised by both his parents and teachers. After giving more attention to the advice of his parents and teachers, Denias seems to have a better understanding about the education and learning process he's going through.

However, after realizing about education's meaning in his life, Denias does not directly make a decision to change his educational life but he tends to be reluctant towards it. Then, it can be assumed that Denias goes to the third stage of the Character Arc, Reluctant to Change because he is reluctant to change his attitude towards his education even though he has realized it. As a matter of fact, he considers education is only a formality. Then, Denias is reluctant to change his attitude and chooses to go with his friends despite going through a task that's important for his education, also being absent in some classes. For these reasons, it can be seen as the way Denias completes his third stage of the Character Arc in his departure.

Coming on this stage, Denias shall overcome his reluctance in order to get an ideal education. Then, Denias will go through the fourth stage of the Character Arc, Overcoming Reluctance in order to keep the important meaning of education in his life. There are two inner conflicts which becomes the clue for Denias to overcome his reluctance. The first thing that Denias does to overcome his reluctance is remembering the message from his mother. It is noted that, the important thing in Denias' life is Denias' mother. Even though, Denias mother has already died but he has to keep his mother's message, which is having an education, then Denias has to be better in his education. Another thing that makes Denias overcoming his reluctance to study is taking positive points from his teacher's departure. In this case, Denias' teacher has already left the village and there was no teacher to teach them but he has to find where education is. Thus, these two points make clear that Denias can overcome his reluctance to study.

After overcoming his reluctance, there must be conditions that make the Denias has a certainty to depart. So, Denias undergoes the fifth inner journey of the Character Arc, Committing to Change because he has to have a certainty to go for the journey. The things that Denias went through to reveal this stage is the condition without a mother and teacher. Then, Denias made a decision to go onto a journey to the city. Thus, the conditions without support from reliable people reveal Denias' certainty to go for the journey and it becomes the end of Denias departure as the way for Denias to reach the second act of the Arc.

### **Denias' Inner Process in Getting Education**

As the continuity of the first act, coming on this stage, Denias has already stepped onto the journey and entered the second act (Denias' Inner Process to Get Education) of the Character Arc. Denias undergoes the first stage of the second act (sixth stage of the Character Arc) Denias goes through the Character Arc's stage, Experimenting with the First Change because he overcomes his physical problems in order to survive in the journey. There are two inner experiences that led Denias to survive the hardships. First thing, Denias, as a boy, has to overcome his fear in order to be familiar with dangerous places, and the second thing that shows how Denias overcomes his physical

problems is through his inner feeling of finding help from the others. Thus these things can become the way to reveal this stage.

For this stage, Denias has already reached the city, where his goal is. In this case, Denias goes through the sixth stage, which is preparing for the Big Change. On this stage, Denias must be ready for the unpredicted big challenges in the city. After experimenting to the first test, Denias goes through the inner process to face big problems that are bigger than what he has been experienced before. Facing problems like having no food and sleeping in the fear of the forests are not enough for Denias. There will be other bigger problems that he must go through to make him ready for impossible ways. In this case, even though he is already in the city but it is not easy for him to get into the school. So, he still needs to fight for it. Then, he goes through two things. First thing that Denias has to be more prepared for pursuing education is being honest. The second thing that Denias goes through to pursue his education is respect to the others. Thus, it can be assumed that enforcing inner processes of being honest and being honorable to others can make Denias become more mature in preparing his mentality for a big life change and to be the material for the next inner stage.

After going through his inner preparation for the big life's change, Denias must attempt the next inner stage's challenge. Denias will go through this inner stage, attempting the Big Change, by being a tough person to pursue his dream. On this stage, Denias goes through two inner experiences in order to show that he is tough. The first inner experience is being confident to show his abilities in learning and the second thing is the second experience Denias goes through to show that he is a brave boy is his willingness to be placed together with his enemy. Either way, Denias is not only tough in facing enemies but also confident to make sure that he has abilities that can be shown to others.

Denias has attempted to show his big inner challenges in the previous step that he must be bolder in facing difficulties. Now, he went through on the ninth stage of inner hero's journey process, which is Consequences of the Attempt (improvements and setbacks) because Denias must undergo the consequences of his decision in attempting the big change of life's experience before. There are two consequences that have been experienced by Denias. The first consequence is getting mental pressure and the second consequence is to surrender to the circumstance. Denias undergoes these two consequences because of his own decision to attempt the life's challenge. Thus, it becomes the way to reveal this stage.

Thus, it can be assumed that in a hero's journey story, inner experiences like journey; limited awareness of individual abilities, increasing the awareness, reluctant to do more, reluctances' of overcoming, and having a certainty to go for the journey are the stages that reveals the hero's inner process of his departure. Moreover, these inner stages are related with Act I of Vogler's Character Arc, which shows a condition where the person has inner struggles to fight for his journey. Here, Denias will go through Act I of the character Arc as it is seen in the stages to make sure that Denias really leaves his home and make him reach the second act.

Thus, Denias has undergone inner experiences like; experimenting with first change, preparing for big inner change, attempting the big changes, and undergoing the consequences of the attempt (improvements and setbacks) are the stages that can reveal the hero's inner process to fight for his journey. Moreover, these inner stages are related with Act II of Vogler's Character Arc, which shows a condition where the person, who wants to be seen as a hero, has inner struggles to fight for his journey. In this case, Denias will undergo Act II of Character Arc as it seen in the stages to make sure that Denias really fights for his journey, although Denias does not get the opportunity as a student yet but he is willing to wait for it and it makes him complete Act III of the Character Act.

### **Denias' Perseverance to Maintain His Effort to Get Education.**

As the continuity of the study on Denias' inner journey processes to get education, I will try to reveal Denias' perseverance regarding his enthusiasm in getting an opportunity as a student at the school in the city. As stepping on this stage, Denias already entered the first stage of Third Act of the Character Arc or tenth stage of the Character Arc. Furthermore, Denias undergoes Character Arc's stage, Rededication to Change, because he must devote his life for what he has been pursued. As it is seen on the previous stage, because of the pressure, getting back to the village may become a choice for Denias. Coming upon this stage, he does not get an opportunity yet. However, Denias chooses to stay in the school's hostel. Thus, to reveal this stage, there is a feeling that makes Denias

dedicates his life to his education, which is feeling deserve to achieve the chance as the student. This feeling can be depicted as the way Denias undergoes the tenth stage of the Character Arc.

After going through the tenth stage, Denias must undergo the eleventh stage, Final Attempt at the Big Change, in order to show the inner process that makes Denias deserve to have the opportunity. In this case, Denias still believes that he will have the opportunity even though there is no certainty from the teacher that he will be accepted as a student at the school. Nevertheless, Denias has tried many ways, but there is still no certainty from the teacher. In order to achieve his dream to get an opportunity of being educated in the city, Denias undergoes two things that make him deserve the opportunity. The first thing of this stage will be the cause and the second thing will be the effect. The first thing is about how Denias gives up on the reality. He run away from the school's hostel because of conflict that caused by the other person, however, Denias does not give up but comes again to meet the teacher. Denias gives a responsibility over the conflict then he is rewarded as the student. As it is known as the effect, Denias claims his glory at this point. Denias gives a responsibility to the other's burden then he claims his reward.

As it is seen in the previous stage, the grand last test has been passed and now Denias is already on this final stage. On this stage, Denias undergoes an inner condition where he must be responsible to be a student. Thus, there shall be conditions that show how Denias' attitudes reveal his certainty to start his education process. The first condition that Denias undergoes is his positive response toward the opportunity. Moreover, the second thing that Denias undergoes to reveal his certainty to be responsible for his education is his satisfaction that is shown through his attitude.

Denias has undergone inner experiences like; Rededication to change, Final Attempt at the Big Change, and Final Mastery of the Problem to the stages that reveals the hero's inner processes to master the problem of his new life. Moreover, these inner stages are related with Act III of Vogler's Character Arc, which shows a condition where the person has inner processes that can make him deserve to achieve the reward and how the hero maintains the reward. Here, Denias will undergo Act III of character Arc as it seen in the stages to make sure that Denias can master the problem that make him really deserves to achieve the opportunity as a student as the way to complete his journey.

## CONCLUSION

When the study of how Denias' inner journey has been revealed in the movie, *Denias, Senandung di Atas Awan*, gives more proof that an ordinary boy can be known as a hero. Denias, a common boy creates another story in human's life. Denias undergoes hero's inner journey process that starting to leave his village to pursue his dream to become an educated boy after undergoing many problems. Knowing the fact that the situation becomes more complicated for Denias to study when there are continuous problems bothering his effort as a student. As it is seen from the beginning of the movie, the only person from the society's side who supports Denias to study is his mother but she has died. Denias seems to lose his passion in studying but then his friend Maleo comes to motivate him. When he is encouraged enough to study, he has to face another problem which is the teacher's departure. The moment creates a deep sadness for Denias when he just witnessed his teacher's departure. He becomes hopeless at that moment. Moreover, education circumstances become more awful when the school's building collapse and Maleo's departure. These repeatedly poor circumstances trigger Denias to depart from his village. He then experiences some inner process even he has to maintain his goal in achieve his goal to get the opportunity as the student in the city. After that, when he gets the education, he has a certainty to go through his education process. As the result, he can be an educated person after going through all of these processes.

Thus, I found that ordinary person can also be a hero at least for himself. It is depicted through Denias' inner journey to get education, which is just by having a great effort, Denias makes himself successfully becomes an educated person in the end of his journey. The inner journey that Denias undergoes to pursue education makes him depart from his village which is caused by the poor education circumstances in the village. Afterward, Denias must undergo inner process in pursuing his education as it is valued in the way he finds the certainty for himself to get opportunity as the student. He is living under the pressure but he has to maintain his goal to get education as it is seen in the way he has a certainty to undergo his education and then he can be an educated person

in the end. It is justified then; Denias' inner journey is revealed and this can lead him to be an educated person.

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