

## **From Tragedy to Transcendence: A Critical Exploration of Spiritual Growth in Hafalan Shalat Delisa**

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### **Book Information**

Hafalan Shalat Delisa is a religious and inspirational novel written by Tere Liye and first published in 2005 by PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, Jakarta. The book is presented in paperback format with a softcover laminated finish and typically measures approximately 13 x 20 cm (standard Indonesian trade size). The first edition consists of 270 pages (the total may vary slightly across reprints), printed in black ink on cream book paper, and categorized under religious fiction, inspirational literature, and disaster narrative. The ISBN of the widely circulated edition is 978-979-22-1697-5. The cover design generally features a simple yet symbolic illustration reflecting themes of innocence and hope, often portraying a young girl against a soft-toned background that evokes emotional depth and spirituality. Set in Lhok Nga, Aceh, and inspired by the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the novel targets a broad readership, including adolescents and adults, and is written in accessible language that emphasizes sincerity (*ikhlas*), faith, resilience, and familial love. Due to its emotional impact and moral message, the novel achieved national popularity and was later adapted into a motion picture, strengthening its cultural presence in contemporary Indonesian literature.

Keywords: English-speaking; Interactive classroom; Sudan

### **INTRODUCTION**

Hafalan Shalat Delisa is a touching novel by Indonesian author Tere Liye that explores themes of faith, patience, sincerity, and resilience in the face of tragedy. Set in Aceh, Indonesia, the novel portrays the life of a young girl whose simple religious goal becomes deeply meaningful after a devastating natural disaster. The purpose of this review is to examine the novel's themes, narrative structure, and contribution to moral and religious literature, as well as to evaluate its strengths and limitations. This book is important because it presents spiritual values through a child's perspective while reflecting real social and humanitarian issues.

### **SUMMARY OF THE BOOK**

The novel tells the story of Delisa, a cheerful and innocent young girl who is learning to memorize her prayers in preparation for a religious examination. Delisa lives happily with her family in Aceh. Her main focus is completing her prayer recitation correctly so she can receive a reward from her mother. However, Delisa's life changes dramatically when a powerful tsunami strikes Aceh. The disaster destroys her home and takes the lives of her mother and sisters. Delisa survives but is seriously injured and must face life without her family. Throughout her recovery, Delisa maintains her faith, kindness, and sincerity, unknowingly inspiring those around her, including doctors, volunteers, and survivors. The story progresses by showing how Delisa's spiritual strength and pure heart help others heal emotionally, even as she continues to endure loss. The novel is structured chronologically, combining everyday family life, tragedy, and post-disaster recovery.

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Pustaka Utama. Set in Aceh, Indonesia, the novel centers on the life of a young girl named Delisa, whose innocence and strong faith form the emotional core of the narrative. Through Delisa's personal journey, the author portrays themes of sincerity, patience, faith, love, and resilience in the face of devastating tragedy. The novel combines the warmth of home, religious devotion, and the experience of disaster into a deeply emotional and spiritually reflective story. At the beginning of the novel, readers are introduced to Delisa as a cheerful and innocent six-year-old girl living happily with her mother and sisters. Her father works as a sailor and frequently travels. Delisa's current focus is memorizing prayer recitations in preparation for her religious exam. Her motivation is simple: she hopes to receive a necklace as a gift from her mother if she passes. This small and seemingly ordinary goal reflects the simplicity of childhood, while also introducing a deeper spiritual foundation that becomes significant later in the story.

The family atmosphere is portrayed warmly and vividly. Delisa's interactions with her mother and sisters demonstrate affection, humor, and everyday family life. These early chapters deliberately build an emotional bond between the reader and the family, making the later tragedy even more impactful. The author carefully establishes a peaceful setting before introducing the novel's central conflict. A turning point occurs when a massive tsunami strikes Aceh. The disaster, inspired by the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, destroys Delisa's home and separates her from her family. In a sudden and traumatic moment, she loses her mother and sisters. Delisa herself is swept away by the waves and later found in critical condition. Although she survives, one of her legs must be amputated due to the severity of her injury.

After the disaster, the narrative shifts toward themes of recovery and spiritual resilience. Delisa regains consciousness in a hospital filled with survivors and aid workers. Initially, she does not fully grasp the extent of her loss. As she gradually learns that her mother and sisters have died, the emotional weight of the story deepens. However, rather than portraying Delisa as a devastated child, the novel emphasizes her sincerity and acceptance. Her faith remains strong, and she does not blame God for what has happened. Throughout her recovery, Delisa unintentionally becomes a source of inspiration for others. Doctors, volunteers, and even foreign aid workers are touched by her optimism and purity of heart. Her sincerity transforms her initial motivation for memorizing prayers—from seeking a reward to performing them solely for God. This transformation represents the novel's central spiritual message: true worship must be based on sincerity, not material expectations.

Meanwhile, Delisa's father, who survives the tsunami because he is at sea, struggles with guilt and grief upon returning home to find his family gone. The reunion between Delisa and her father becomes one of the most emotional moments in the story. Together, they learn to rebuild their lives despite their physical and emotional scars. The novel concludes with a sense of hope and spiritual growth. Although Delisa has lost much, she gains a deeper understanding of faith and sincerity. The tragedy does not break her spirit; instead, it strengthens her character. Through a chronological narrative structure, the author successfully weaves home life, disaster, loss, and recovery into a cohesive and emotionally moving story.

Overall, the novel illustrates how a simple childhood goal transforms into a profound spiritual journey. The story moves from innocence to tragedy, and from tragedy to resilience, emphasizing that faith and sincerity can provide strength even in the darkest circumstances.

### **CRITICAL EVALUATION**

One of the major strengths of *Hafalan Shalat Delisa* is its emotional depth and simplicity. Tere Liye uses clear and accessible language, making the story easy to understand while still deeply moving. The choice to present the story through a child's perspective effectively highlights sincerity, faith, and unconditional love without sounding preachy. The novel also has strong moral and spiritual value. Delisa's character symbolizes pure faith and patience, offering readers an inspiring example of resilience. The author successfully connects personal loss with broader social and humanitarian themes, especially in the context of natural disasters. However, a limitation of the novel is that some characters, aside from Delisa, are not explored in great psychological depth. Additionally, the emotional tone is consistently sentimental, which may feel overly idealistic for some readers. From an academic perspective, the novel relies more on emotional storytelling than analytical or theoretical discussion, which limits its use as a scholarly reference but strengthens its literary and moral appeal.

One of the most significant strengths of *Hafalan Shalat Delisa* lies in its emotional depth combined with narrative simplicity. The author employs accessible language and a straightforward storytelling style, enabling readers from various age groups to engage with the text. This stylistic simplicity does not weaken the narrative; rather, it strengthens the emotional resonance of the story. By avoiding overly complex structures or abstract language, the novel ensures that its moral and spiritual messages remain clear and relatable. The use of a child's perspective is highly effective in conveying complex themes such as death, disaster, faith, and loss. Presenting these themes through Delisa's innocence prevents the narrative from becoming overly doctrinal or moralistic. Instead of offering explicit theological arguments, the novel allows readers to experience faith through lived experience. This strategy enhances authenticity and emotional credibility. The child-centered perspective also creates a sharp contrast between the simplicity of childhood and the harsh reality of disaster, intensifying the story's emotional impact.

Another strength of the novel is its social and humanitarian dimension. By placing the story within the context of the Aceh tsunami, the narrative connects personal tragedy with collective suffering. The presence of doctors, volunteers, and international humanitarian workers reflects themes of global solidarity and compassion. This broader social framework elevates the novel beyond a purely domestic or religious narrative, making it relevant to discussions of disaster literature and trauma narratives. Structurally, the novel's chronological arrangement contributes to clarity and emotional development. The peaceful family life at the beginning contrasts sharply with the sudden devastation caused by the tsunami, intensifying the emotional effect. The recovery phase is depicted gradually, allowing readers to witness both physical and psychological healing. This progression supports the thematic emphasis on spiritual resilience and endurance.

However, despite its strengths, the novel also has several limitations. One noticeable weakness is the limited psychological exploration of supporting characters. While Delisa is well-developed, other characters—such as her father and sisters—are not explored in depth. Their emotional struggles are present but not extensively analyzed. A more detailed examination of their internal conflicts could have enriched the narrative's complexity. Furthermore, the novel's emotional tone tends to remain consistently sentimental. While this sentimentality enhances its inspirational quality, it may appear overly idealistic to some readers. Delisa's acceptance of tragedy is portrayed with remarkable maturity, which, although inspiring, may seem somewhat unrealistic from a psychological perspective. A more nuanced depiction of grief and anger could have added

greater realism to the narrative. From an academic perspective, the novel prioritizes emotional storytelling over theoretical engagement. It does not provide analytical discussions on disaster management, trauma psychology, or theological debate. Consequently, its contribution lies more in moral and spiritual inspiration than in scientific argumentation. Nevertheless, this focus aligns with the author's literary intentions and intended audience.

In conclusion, *Hafalan Shalat Delisa* is a powerful example of faith-based disaster literature. Its strengths include emotional resonance, accessible language, moral clarity, and strong thematic coherence. Despite minor limitations in character complexity and psychological realism, the novel remains impactful and meaningful. It successfully demonstrates how innocence and sincerity can illuminate hope amid profound loss.

### **REFLECTION & CONCLUSION**

Overall, *Hafalan Shalat Delisa* is a meaningful and emotionally powerful novel that offers valuable lessons about faith, patience, and humanity. The book is especially suitable for students, young readers, and anyone interested in inspirational or religious literature. It also serves as a gentle introduction to discussions about disaster, loss, and spiritual resilience. Despite minor limitations in character complexity, the novel makes a significant contribution to moral and faith-based literature. The reviewer highly recommends this book for readers seeking emotional inspiration and reflective insight into life, faith, and sincerity.

### **REFERENCES (if any)**

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