

Various Forms Of Racial Discrimination's Act In Afghanistan Towards The Minority Group As Depicted In *The Kite Runner* Novel

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Abstract

*This study analyzes the issue of racial discrimination in Afghanistan. This study is aimed to provide depictions about various forms of racial discrimination acts. The object of this study is *The Kite Runner* novel by Khaled Hosseini. To analyze the novel, this study used descriptive qualitative method by taking data from the novel as the primary data and the data from journals, articles, thesis, essays, and websites that were related to this study as the secondary data. There were some techniques in collecting data such as reading the novel, identifying the data, classifying the data, and reducing the data. The result of this study showed that in *The Kite Runner* novel, the Pashtun discriminates the Hazara. The Pashtuns gives a different treatment to the Hazaras. The Pashtuns also excluded the Hazaras from the social environment because the Pashtuns felt that they had a different status. The Pashtuns often called the Hazaras with racist names. In addition, another form of racial discrimination taken by the Pashtun against the Hazara was to limit all opportunities owned by the Hazara in all fields. The Pashtuns also carried out oppression and extermination or mass killing of the Hazaras as a form of their racial discrimination against the Hazaras.*

Keywords: *Minority group, Afghanistan, Racial Discrimination*

1. INTRODUCTION

Literary works are part of the literature that contains about images, thoughts, or stories composed of words that are arranged to form a meaning (Abdessalami, 2018). In the literary works, words are the main key because the reader can know and understand the intent and the purpose of the author through the words. Literary works have a close relationship with society. According to Arjun Dubey, literary work is a reflection from the condition of the society because "what happens in a society is reflected in literary works in one form or another" (Dubey, 2013). In creating a literary work the author needs an idea or topic that will be discussed in it. The idea or topic is usually taken from a phenomenon or problem that exists and develop in society.

There are various kinds of issue that develop in society that can be raised as a topic in literary works. Discrimination issue is one of the issues that often raised in literary works. John F. Dovidio et al explains that discrimination is defined as the worst attitude which contains actions that hurtful and provide direct detriment for other groups. The form of discrimination is not a belief, but the application of that belief into action. Discrimination is a negative action carried out by members of a group against members of other groups. Discrimination is a reflection of an attitude or action that tends to favor a particular group (Dovidio, 2017).

There are many targets of discrimination. As stated in the journal of the National Action Plan that the targets of discrimination are “race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language or birth” (2015). Racial discrimination is one of the type of discrimination that gives different behaviors to the others depending on “race or ethnicity” (Pager and Shepherd, 2008). In racial discrimination, every race or ethnic has a different position in society. Race or ethnicity is categorized into several groups to determine their level of equality. For racial or ethnic groups that considered equal will be treated fairly, while racial or ethnic groups that considered unequal or different will be treated differently.

The problem of racial discrimination does not only occur in a country but occurs in various countries around the world. The target of racial discrimination are countries that have race or ethnic diversity. Usually racial discrimination is carried out by the majority group against the inferior minorities group. Afghanistan is one of the countries that become the target of racial discrimination because this country is a country that has a diversity of race and ethnicity in it. There are groups of Tajiks, Pashtuns, Uzbeks, Hazaras, Baluchi, and Turkoman. This diversity in Afghanistan is the beginning of the emergence of racial discrimination in Afghanistan.

Akram Sadat Hosseini and Esmail Zohdi states:

...”majority” refers to the extensive number of Pashtuns in Afghanistan, it also implies their power, influence, and wealth in this society. In contrast, while the term “minority” discloses the low number of hazaras, it also reveals lack of the economic, political, and social power and influence faced by certain groups (Hazaras)... (Hosseini and Zohdi, 2016).

In Afghanistan Pashtun is a majority ethnic group while Hazaras is classified as minority ethnic group. Pashtuns hold full power in various fields. While Hazara as a weak and minority group does not have power in any field. With its position as majority race and ethnic, the Pashtun tends to take advantage of their position as the powerful group to discriminate the Hazara and limits the role of Hazara in various fields. This act of discrimination is carried out by the Pashtun to maintain their position and identity in the community.

The Kite Runner novel is one of the literary works that provides an overview of the acts of racial discrimination committed by the Pashtuns as the ethnic majority against the Hazaras. In this novel is told that the Pashtuns are the heirs and descendants of pure Afghans while the Hazaras are Mongol descent so that Hazaras' face looks different from Afghans in general. The racial discrimination act experienced by the Hazaras in this novel is shown through the life story of a young Hazara boy named Hassan and his family. They

come from Hazara ethnic group and embrace Shi'a beliefs. Hassan and his father "Ali" worked at Pashtuns's house since Hassan was child, and they lived in a muddy hut behind his employer's luxurious house.

As the Hazaras, living among the Pashtun society is not an easy thing for Hassan and his father. They always encounter difficult times in their lives caused by the racial discrimination performed by the Pashtuns against the Hazaras in Afghanistan. Their days are filled with many obstacles and challenges. They are discriminated, vilified, differentiated, and excommunicated among Pashtuns community. They also have to accept every mockery, insults, bad thinking, as well as inhumane treatment performed by Pashtuns until their end of life.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology contains of three points, they are types of the research, data organizing, and analyzing the data. The type of the research is qualitative research. Based on Punch, qualitative research is "a type of social science research that collects and works with non-numerical data that seeks to interpret meaning from these data that help us to understand social life through the study of targeted populations or places" (qtd. in Mohajan, 2018). In qualitative research, the collected data is not the data in the forms of numbers. Qualitative research focuses on data that has meaning that can be interpreted. The second point is data organizing. In data organizing there are data collecting method and types of the data. Data collecting method consist of four techniques in analyzing the object of the research.

The first technique is reading the novel. The source of the primary data in this research taken from Khaled Hosseini's novel entitled *The Kite Runner*. To gain the deep concept of the meaning of the story and also to gain the complete data that this research requires, it needs reading the novel for several times. The second technique is identifying the data. After reading *The Kite Runner* novel for several times to collect data, the writer identified the data to obtain specific data that matches with the problem formulation for further analysis. To identify the data, the writer starts with reading the novel from the beginning and concentrates to gain the appropriate data. After finding the appropriate data, it will be marked by underlining the data and taking notes. The appropriate data can be in the form of paragraphs, sentences, narrations, dialogues or monologues, and descriptions that connected with the topic. The third technique is classifying the data. It is a technique that used to classify data that has been identified. In classifying the data, the writer must ensure that the problem can be solved correctly using classified data. In this step, the writer also needs to confirm that the data from the novel and the secondary data are compatible with one another. The fourth technique is reducing the data. In this technique, reducing is conducted by taking the required data and deleting the unnecessary data to make the data more simple, clear, and easy to used to solve the problem. When reducing the data, the data taken is data that more suitable and contains strong fact or proof to answer the problem formulation, while the data that are not needed or has weak fact or proof to answer the problem are deleted or reduced.

The types of the data in this qualitative research is divided into two types. They are primary data and secondary data. The main source in this research is the primary data, and the supporting data is secondary data. As the main source, the primary data taken from the novel *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini. The writer chooses the evidences from the sentences, prologues, dialogues, monologues, narrations, and description.

Secondary data is the supporting data which is picked up from some data for example international journals, articles, thesis, essays, and websites that related to the research.

The last point in research methodology is analyzing the data. In analyzing the data, this study uses descriptive qualitative technique. This technique is chosen to explain the outstretched elements contained in *The Kite Runner* novel and make an understanding of the story via quotations, statements, and discriptions. It also includes data such as dialogues, monologues, sentences, prologues, and descriptions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Racial discrimination can manifest itself into a variety of actions. Devah Pager and Hanna Shepherd explained that the act of treating someone or a group poorly or differently due to their different races or ethnicities or differences in characteristics related to race or ethnicity is called racial discrimination (Pager and Shepherd, 2008).

Evidence that shows racial discrimination in this novel can be seen from Amir's explanation.

Like the times Kaka Homayoun's projector got stuck on the same slide, the same image kept flashing in my mind over and over:

Hassan his head downcast, serving drinks to Assef and Wali. Maybe it would be for the best (Hosseini 89).

This evidence describes the situation when Amir was celebrating his birthday. In the birthday party everyone was involved and enjoyed the party. Hassan and his father were also at Amir's birthday party. But the difference is they were invited to come to Amir's birthday party not to enjoy a meal at the party and not to spend time with other guests, but they were invited to come to Amir's birthday party to be servants and serve all invited guests. The party is only for Amir's friends and also Baba's friends who are wealthy Pashtuns. Whereas Hassan and his father were only poor Hazaras from a lower class and not equal to the wealthy Pashtuns.

Another form of racial discrimination is an act that gives disadvantages of another person or group. Based on Psychological Encyclopaedia racial discrimination refers to a destructive action that places or encourages a group or a member of a particular race group especially the minority into an adverse situation (quoted in Laki, 2012).

The proof of racial discrimination as a destructive action is shown in the novel *The Kite Runner* through Amir's conversation with his servant named Hassan who is a Hazaras.

“Eat dirt if I told you to,” I said. I knew I was being cruel, like when I'd taunt him if he didn't know some big word. But there was something fascinating--albeit in a sick way--about teasing Hassan. Kind of like when we used to play insect torture. Except now, he was the ant and I was holding the magnifying glass (Hosseini 47).

This evidence shows that Amir conducted racial discrimination against Hassan. Amir always forced and told Hassan to fulfill all his request and serve him. In this evidence Amir put Hassan as a Hazaras into an adverse situation because he forced

Hassan to do something that Hassan did not want to prove Hassan's loyalty to Amir. In addition, Amir also enjoyed every action he took while torturing Hassan.

According to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination "racial discrimination" shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin" (qtd. in OHCHR & UNESCO, 2005). It can be seen that racial discrimination is the form of an action that aims to eliminate or reduce the role of a particular group within the community by giving different treatment, excluding, and limiting the particular group.

The practice of racial discrimination can be seen in the *The Kite Runner* novel in the conversation between Assef as a Pashtuns and Hassan as a Hazaras.

Assef: "But before you sacrifice yourself for him, think about this: Would he do the same for you? Have you ever wondered why he never includes you in games when he has guests? Why he only plays with you when no one else is around? I'll tell you why, Hazara. Because to him, you're nothing but an ugly pet. Something he can play with when he's bored, something he can kick when he is angry. Don't ever fool yourself and think you're something more."

Hassan: "Amir agha and I are friends,"

Assef : "Friends?". "You pathetic fool! Someday you'll wake up from your little fantasy and learn just how good of friend he is." (Hosseini 63-64).

In this dialogue Assef tried to show the difference status and social class between Amir and Hassan in order to hurt Hassan's feelings. Assef shows that Amir is Hassan employer and a wealthy Pashtuns, while Hassan is only a servants from the poor Hazara's family and not equal to Amir. Assef told Hassan that no matter how much Hassan sacrificed for Amir, he would not necessarily do the same for Hassan. Assef also explained that Amir never involved and always excluded Hassan when Amir had a guest and Amir played with Hassan only when there was no one else around him because Hassan was a Hazaras. Hassan was not equal to Amir and Amir understood the difference status between himself and Hassan. Therefore Amir always excluded and restricted Hassan from being involved when a guest came to his house and chose to play with his guests. Amir's actions described by Assef are included in racial discrimination because Amir limits and excludes Hassan from Amir's social environment only because he is a Hazaras. Amir did not give Hassan the freedom to socialize with his guests.

Another form of racial discrimination against the Hazaras can be seen from Amir's explanation.

Of all the neighborhood boys who tortured Ali, Assef was by far the most relentless. He was, in fact, the originator of the Babalu jeer, Hey, Babalu, who did you eat today? Huh? Come on, Babalu, give us a smile! And on days when he felt particularly inspired, he spiced up his badgering a little, Hey, you flat-nosed Babalu, who did you eat today? Tell us, you slant-eyed donkey! (Hosseini 34).

From this quotation it can be seen that all of Amir's neighbors who were Pashtuns, especially Assef, always mocked and insulted Ali, Hassan's father because he was a

Hazaras. They always called Ali as Babalu which means ghost, flat-nosed babalu, and slanted-eyed donkey. This name calling was made based on the characteristics that exist in the Hazaras that are identical to flat nosed and slanted eyes with the aim of hurting, insulting, and degrading the Hazaras.

It is clear that the actions taken by Amir's neighbors and also Assef refer to racial discrimination. As explained in the journal of Human Rights in British Columbia that "Racial discrimination occurs when someone treats you badly or denies you a benefit, harasses or insults you because of your race, colour, ancestry, or place of origin. Racial discrimination can take many forms. For example calling you racist names" (2016). Racial discrimination is all forms of injustice and bad actions including when calling someone by a name based on race, color, ancestry, or place of origin in order to insult and mock the race, color, ancestry, or place of origin.

In racial discrimination, the roles and the opportunities of the minority group are regulated and limited by the majority group. Bobo & Fox 2003 states in the National Association of Schools Psychologist's Position Statement that "Racial discrimination includes direct or indirect, overt or subtle action (s) by the majority group that limits the economic, political, educational, and social opportunities of a minority group" (2012). In discriminating against minorities, the majority will seek to block and eliminate all minority roles in various fields. This is done to maintain the position of the majority group in society as the ruling group in various fields.

The evidence that racial discrimination limits minority groups in various fields is described by Amir.

Sitting cross-legged, sunlight and shadows of pomegranate leaves dancing on his face, Hassan absently plucked blades of grass from the ground as I read him stories he couldn't read for himself. That Hassan would grow up illiterate like Ali and most Hazaras had been decided the minute he had been born, perhaps even the moment he had been conceived in Sanaubar's unwelcoming womb--after all, what use did a servant have for the written word? But despite his illiteracy, or maybe because of it, Hassan was drawn to the mystery of words, seduced by a secret world forbidden to him (Hosseini 24).

From the description of Amir it can be seen that Hassan and Ali as the members of the Hazara did not have the same opportunity to obtain education like the Pashtuns. In Afghanistan, the Hazara that considered as the lower class did not allowed to go to school and get education. The opportunity to get education has been lost since the Hazaras were born into the world and even their fate has been decided since their birth without being able to vote. People who are considered capable and worthy to get education are only the Pashtuns because they have wealth and high respect in society.

Besides that, because of the lack of education obtained by the Hazaras, the Hazaras are also not allowed to get the same job as the Pashtuns. They may only work in low payment job. The only choice left for the Hazaras was to work as a servant or a maid. Because of this racial discrimination, the Hazaras living in ignorance, illiteracy and poverty. This action shows that the Pashtuns have discriminated the Hazaras in the fields of education, economics and also social opportunities. The Hazaras are not allowed to get an education. Besides that they also do not have the same opportunity as Pashtuns in the

community and they can only be employed as servant or maid with low payment in Afghanistan.

In addition to limit all the roles of minority groups in various fields, racial discrimination also can be in the form of another action, namely oppression. This method is used to maintain the position of a group in society. Gordon explained that oppression was one of the methods used to discriminate against other groups, especially minorities. In this way the group that discriminates will be able to dominate and control other groups (quoted in Laki, 2012).

The evidence of oppression as a form of racial discrimination in this novel is shown by Amir's explanation of the history of the Hazaras.

Then one day, I was in Baba's study, looking through his stuff, when I found one of my mother's old history books... I blew the dust of it, sneaked it into bed with me that night, and was stunned to find an entire chapter on Hazara history. An entire chapter dedicated to Hassan's people! In it, I read that my people, the Pashtuns, had persecuted and oppressed the Hazaras. It said the Hazaras had tried to rise against the Pashtuns in the nineteenth century, but the Pashtuns had "quelled them with unspeakable violence." The book said that my people had killed the Hazaras, driven them from their lands, burned their homes and sold their women. The book said part of the reason Pashtuns had oppressed the Hazaras was that Pashtuns were Sunni Muslims, while Hazaras were Shi'a (Hosseini 8).

From this book on the history of the Hazaras, which was read by Amir, it can be seen that from the beginning of nineteenth century the Hazaras as the minority group in Afghanistan had experienced oppression and persecution as a form of racial discrimination carried out by the Pashtuns. Pashtuns were oppressed and treated the Hazaras in an arbitrary and blind manner. The Pashtuns expelled the Hazaras from their own land, burned the house of the Hazaras, killed the Hazaras, and even trafficked the Hazaras women. This is all done by the Pashtuns to maintain their position and status as the powerful majority group in Afghanistan.

The other practice of racial discrimination carried out against the Hazaras in this novel is shown by Amir.

I had read about the Hazara massacre in Mazar-i-Sharif in the papers. It had happened just after the Taliban took over Mazar, one of the last cities to fall. I remembered Soraya handing me the article over breakfast, her face bloodless.

"Door-to-door. We only rested for food and prayer," the Talib said. He said it fondly, like a man telling of a great party he'd attended. "We left the bodies in the streets, and if their families tried to sneak out to drag them back into their homes, we'd shoot them too (Hosseini 243).

At that time Afghanistan was under the control of the Taliban. The Taliban colonized and attacked every area occupied by the Hazaras in Afghanistan. They attacked the Hazaras blindly. In this evidence it is also explained that when the Taliban controlled Mazar-i-Sharif which was one of the areas where the Hazaras lived, they carried out the extermination and mass killing towards the Hazaras. They came to every house occupied

by the Hazaras and shoot them one by one. This action was carried out by the Taliban as the way to discriminate the Hazaras. In addition they also had strong vision to eradicate and eliminate all the Hazaras from the land of Afghanistan. The Taliban lets the corpses of the Hazaras lay down on the streets and ignored them, even they did not hesitate to kill people who wanted to bring the corpse back home.

The acts of extermination and mass killing carried out by the Taliban against the Hazaras are classified into racial discrimination actions. As explained by Allport, Newman and Erber, & Staub that racial discrimination is an action when someone acts badly towards members of other racial groups such as "physical attack, and extermination". "Extermination or mass killing" based on race is the highest level of racial discrimination triggered by hatred and prejudice (quoted in Quillian, 2006).

4. CONCLUSION

This research aims to give depictions about the actions of racial discrimination in Afghanistan committed by the majority group towards the minority group. The Pashtun is the majority racial and ethnic group in Afghanistan. This group is descended from pure Afghans and controls the land of Afghanistan. While the minority group that often experiences various acts of discrimination in Afghanistan is the Hazara. The Hazara is a descendant of race and ethnic Mongolian from China.

From the data findings which have been analyzed, some conclusions are collected. *The Kite Runner* novel describes various forms of racial discrimination committed by the Pashtuns against the Hazaras. The Pashtuns give a different treatment to the Hazaras. The Pashtuns also exclude the Hazaras from the social environment because the Pashtuns feel that they have a different status. The Pashtuns often call the Hazaras with racist names. In addition, another form of racial discrimination taken by the Pashtun against the Hazara is to limit all opportunities owned by the Hazara in all fields. The Pashtuns also carried out oppression and extermination or mass killing of the Hazaras as a form of their racial discrimination against the Hazaras.

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