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Halwai's Struggle Against Injustice Of Indian Caste System In Adiga's *The White Tiger* Novel

Anita Rahmah Dewi*

Universitas Billfath, Indonesia
anitarahmahdewi92@gmail.com

Fais Wahidatul Arifatin

Universitas Muhammadiyah Lamongan, Indonesia
Arifiatin1992@gmail.com

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*Corresponding Author

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis perjuangan tokoh utama melawan ketidakadilan sistem kasta India yang tercermin dalam novel *The White Tiger* karya Aravind Adiga. Ini menggambarkan potret kesenjangan sosial yang terjadi menyebabkan masyarakat miskin terpinggirkan. Hal ini juga menguraikan tentang struktur kelas sosial yang ada dalam masyarakat India dan keadaan yang terkait dengannya. Kajian ini menerapkan teori Marxisme yang berfokus pada struktur kelas sosial yang meliputi Borjuis dan Proletariat, perjuangan kelas dan sistem Kasta India. Karena penelitian ini menerapkan kritik marxis, maka peneliti menerapkan pendekatan author-oriented oleh Mario Klarer untuk mendapatkan data yang memadai. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa Balram sebagai representasi keberhasilan kelas bawah melalui kondisi kemiskinan, kastanya melompat dari Sudra ke Ksatria, dan ia mendekonstruksi struktur kelas sosial yang telah tersebar di masyarakat seperti sistem Kasta India. oleh usahanya. Melalui novel ini, Adiga menggambarkan kondisi sosial yang terjadi dalam masyarakat Hindu India. Kemudian, keberhasilan novel ini mengangkat tema kelas sosial sebagai kritikus Kasta India.

Kata kunci: Ketidakadilan, Kasta India, Perjuangan

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the main character's struggle against injustice of Indian caste system which is reflected in the novel entitled *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga. It depicts the portrait of social disparity between the rich and the poor in India. It also elaborates about structure of social classes which exist in Indian society and the circumstances related to them. This study applies Marxism theory which focuses on structure of social classes which include Bourgeoisie and Proletariat, class struggle and Indian Caste system. Due to this study is applied Marxist criticism, the researcher applies author-oriented approach by Mario Klarer to obtain the adequate data. The result of this study indicates that Balram as representation of lower-class successes going through the poverty condition, his caste jump from the Shudra to Kshatria, and he deconstructs the structure of social classes which has been spread out in society such as Indian Caste system by his efforts. Through this novel, Adiga portrays the social condition which happens in Hindu Indian society. Then, these novel successes lift out the theme of social classes as the critics of Indian Caste.

Keywords: Injustice, Indian Caste, Struggle

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INTRODUCTION

India is the country which not only popular by Bollywood and its movie, but also its literary works which have colored the world of literature. There are various themes which have been brought out by Indian author, such as about social, politic, culture, identity, Diaspora, even about the issues of post colonialism. There are many Indian authors who lift up the theme concerning social critique toward social structure and culture within their works, like Arundhaty Roy in his novel entitled *The God of Small Things* which describes the sensitive issues concerning social structure in society such as woman and caste. Vika Swarup also portrays the social discrepancy in India by setting of Mumbai city in her novel entitled *Q&A* and many others.

Likewise, Choudhury (2015) points out that Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008) contests the image of an emergent and shining India that makes the world rethink about their perception. Since most of the representations of India "in film and books coming out of India" carry the stories of the economic, political and technological boom, the lives of the underclass are "invisible" (DiMartino, 2014). Against this backdrop of representations, Adiga (2008) took a bold step in narrating the stories of the unprivileged people who live in "an India of Darkness". The central preoccupation of the novel is to diagnose the Indian society which has "burning problems like illiteracy, unemployment, pollution, poverty, caste discrimination, servitude, economic disparity and corruption" to further re-orient themselves towards the grass root people and to integrate the vast majority of the poor as they have been marginalized so far in the overall spectrum of India's development (Winmayil, 2012:6). The fruit of India's freedom has been consumed by the tiny minority and the other "99.9 percent" (Adiga, 2008:103) of the population has been relentlessly exploited.

Aravind Adiga, an Indian born, Australian educated writer, shot to fame with his very first work "The White Tiger", which went on to win the Man Booker prize in 2008, defeating stiff competition from the likes of Salman Rushdie, and other authors. (Deswal, 2014). The White Tiger is presented as an epistolary novel, a series of letters written over the period of seven nights. It is an interesting ploy used by the author to keep the readers glued of the novel. Balram Halwai is writing to the premier of china, Wen Jiabao, due to visit the city of Bangalore, Balram is living in, in a week's time. Balram does have something to get off his chest, of course, and his letters to the Chinese premier are a confession of sorts. Balram tells his life-story, recounting how he got to where he now is successful entrepreneur in Bangalore (Ramani, 2015:166).

Furthermore, this study focuses on the main character named Balram Halwai which is described as a man who comes from lower caste and his effort against poverty and injustice in Indian caste system by Marxism approach. This study also elaborates about Adiga's point of view of class stratification and caste system which happen in India

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In accordance with the background of the research which is mentioned in previous chapter, this study focuses to investigate the form of social classes phenomena which happen in Indian Caste System which is strongly linked with the context of economical background. Therefore, this study is designed to apply Marxist approach.

Marxist approach sees social classes as the causing factor and also effect of injustice, as has been elaborated clearly in previous chapter that Marxism investigates the class social so that this study is consider as Marxist study. It leads the research to answer the problem about the situation and condition which relate Indian caste system.

Furthermore, since the source of data is literary work, this study applies context-oriented

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approach in conducting this study as Klarer points out that,

“The term context-oriented approaches refer here to a heterogenous group of schools and methodologies which do not regard literary text as self-contained, independent works of art but try to place them within a large context. Depending on the movement, this context can be history, social, and political background, literary genre, nationality, or gender. The most influential movement to this day is literary history, which divides literary phenomena into periods, describes the text with respect to its historical background, dates texts and examines their mutual influence. This movement is associated with the discipline of history and is guided by historical methodology.” (Klarer, 2004:78)

Basically, research of literary work has different method with the other research because in literary research, theory becomes a method in conducting the study. From the quotation in previous paragraph, it indicates that this study uses context-oriented approach because it attempts to explore social issues about social classes and related to the Indian caste system, this study is going to employ more than what in the text of literary work.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Balram Halwai’s Family as Representation of lower caste Society in Laxamangarh

Through the novel entitled “The White Tiger”, Aravind Adiga portrays the poverty which suffers the lower caste society, and it also reveals the life dynamic of lower caste society and many conflicts which are emergent. For example, there is no right for material ownership, nothing access toward education, the issue of marriage, and the issue of social culture, include caste system.

Halwai’s family is considered as *Shudra* caste because they have no material ownership toward home, land, and others. Even their poverty makes them owe to the other people. Shudra caste is considered as lower class which does not get status as the social classes which is recognized as upper classes. Therefore, Halwai’s family does not have economic power which makes them are consider as lower classes as Marxism theory which has been elaborated in the previous chapter that economic power is shaped the social structure. They also have no high social structure in society due to their condition in poverty and they are uneducated people. “Me, and thousands of others in this country are half-baked, because we were never allowed to complete our schooling” (Adiga, 2008, p. 8). From that utterance, it indicates that Balram and the other people in Laxamangarh mostly are not educated man, because they have no enough money to pay for school.

Prominently, the issue which lifts out in this novel is about the material ownership. The struggle to get the status of material ownership is the central discourse which has been told from the beginning part of story by subtitled “The First Night”. By reading this part, the readers have been stretched out the portrait of poor society in a village namely Laxamangarh (pp. 15-16). The struggle is pointed out to the reader through the character of Balram who is the representation of poor family and lower caste society. The struggle against poverty gets emphasizing from the author, it is described through Halwai’s family physically, and they are blacker and thinner for day to day only due to get a mouthful of rice. As the following utterance “A rich man body is like premium cotton pillow, white and soft, and blank. *Ours* are different. My father’s spine was a knotted rope, the kind that women use in villangers to pull water from wells, the clavicle curved around his neck in high relief, like a dog’s collar; cuts and nicks and scars, like little weep mark in his flesh, ran down his chest and waist, reaching down below his hip bones into his buttocks. The story of poor man’s life is written on his body, in sharp pen.” (Adiga, 2008, p. 22).

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In line with the quotation above, Adiga deliberately wrote the word 'ours' by italic and underline, it describes the contrast between poor man's body and rich man's body. Body is described as the tool to differentiate the condition between lower class and upper class. Adiga uses the word 'Ours' not 'his' to describe his father's body by the purpose to indicate that it is the plural body which can be found in many poor men's body which lives in a village. Those bodies have demonstrated toward the hard competition to fight of life, moreover in the area which cannot be separated with the caste system.

Related to the explanation above, the lower caste society also gets difficulties to access the service of healthy, it is indicated that in this novel portrays Balram's parent finally died due to the illness, and they do not get any medical treatment because of the economic condition. Balram's mother suffers the illness which makes her vomit a blood and just lies in the bed without any medical treatment until die. Finally, her human corpse is cremated in the Ganga River. "I remember going down the steps of downhill road in the holy city of Beranas, at the rear of a funeral procession carrying my mother's body to the Ganga" (Adiga, 2008:12). While Balram's father suffers TBC, he has sufficient time cured in the government hospital, "as the government ledger reported, my father was permanently cured tuberculosis." (Adiga, 2008, p. 42). However, his father is cannot be rescued and die in the hospital corridor. It clearly explains that it is difficult to get the access of healthy for the lower class due to the economic condition.

Adiga describes that phenomenon by the government healthy institution which does not supply facility, and give the adequate healthy service to poor family. Moreover, the Great Socialist which is got the job in rural region success to be persuaded by certain person to rub down money. By money, that person can manipulate the presence of Great Socialist, so that they are not necessary to come in rural hospital. "you can keep the rest of your government salary and go work in some private hospital for the rest of week. Forget the village" (Adiga, 2008:41). In this novel explained that there are many illnesses such as TBC, Hepatitis, Vertiligo which are often suffered by poor people, the location of government hospital which is far away and the doctor which does not come make the sufferer late to be rescued and finally die. "there is no hospital in Laxamagarh, although there are three different foundation stones for a hospital, laid by three different politicians before three different election" (Adiga, 2008: 39).

Furthermore, the issue of education also lifts out by the author, to represent that lower caste is uneducated people due to the economic condition. In this novel, it can be seen that education is not particular thing in poor family. Adiga describes that money is the most valuable thing in the poor family. Therefore, many parents acquiesce in order their children to earn money than study in a school. It is described by the author through the character Balram and Kishan, Balram's brother. They have no chance finishing their school because they should help their parent to earn money. In this case, money is a tool to unite a family and continue life, so that the importance thing is family interest, and self-interest should be ignored, include the interest to get better education. Thus, in this condition, education as the problem solving of poverty is not prevailed. Moreover, Adiga named the people who cannot continue their study as 'half-baked' (Adiga, 2008:8)

Ruling and Ruled Class Reflected in 'The White Tiger'

Balram Halwai and his family is *Shudra* caste, it can be seen by the name 'Halwai' which means as 'sweet-makers' (Adiga, 2008:47). It means that their fate has been determined as waiter, so that they belong to *Shudra* which is elaborated in previous chapter. As the following utterance "that's my caste, my destiny. Everyone in the Darkness who hears that name knows all about me at once. That's why Kishan and I getting job at sweetshops wherever we went. The owner thought, *Ah, they are Halwais, making sweets and tea is in their blood.*" (Adiga, 2008:53). From that utterance, by the name of Halwai, it makes their fate is like has

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been determined since they were born, they are born to be a sweet-maker which lead them to be a lower caste society.

The high caste is represented by Mr. Ashok's family, he is Balram's boss. Mr. Ashok's family is owner of land, he has coal business in Dhanbad, which mentioned as 'a rotten business' or 'Bad, bad business' (Adiga, 2008:105). He mixes up with the corruption with the cabinet minister and politician concerning the robbing of taxes. He lives full of property, but finally he got incident 'income-tax mess' (Adiga, 2008:203).

Mr. Ashok's family includes of Stork, Mr. Stork, Madam Pinky, Mukesh Sir, Roshan (Mukesh's son), and his wife. The original name of Mr. Stork is Thakur Ramdev. The word 'Thakur' refers to the identity and usually is putted on the first name of rich people in village, such as the owner of land. Those rich people are considered as *Kshatria* caste. The coal business and becoming the owner of land automatically lead Mr. Ashok's family on high status of economic and social position. They live in luxurious house in Dhanbad, "I got to a house with ten foot high walls, and a cage of iron grilles around each window" (Adiga, 2008:50). When Mr. Ashok moves to Delhi to manage his business, he and his wife live in elite apartment in Gurgaon, "... drove them to their new home, which was up on the thirteenth floor of a gigantic apartment building. The name of apartment building was Buckingham Towers B Block" (Adiga, 2008:107). From that narration, the ownership of elite apartment shows that Mr. Ashok's family has a high economic power which leads them considered as the upper classes, as the theory of Marxism which has been elaborated before that economic power is shaped a social structure.

A high economic power makes Mr. Ashok's family is able to send their child, Mr. Ashok in high education, in New York, America. "My son" the Stork said "Returned from America recently". The Great Socialist squeezed Mr. Ashok's cheeks, "Good, we need more boys to come back and built India into super power" (Adiga, 2008:87). Besides living in the luxurious house, they also have two cars, named Maruki Suzuki, and Honda City. "there were two cars in the garage, one was your standard Maruti Suzuki, that little white car you see all over India, and other was the Honda City" (Adiga, 2008:52). They also have many servants in their house, includes Balram. Mr. Ashok and Mukesh Sir are capable to communicate in English which shows the high culture which they have. "Mr. Ashok spoke in English ... and his brother replied in English..." (Adiga, 2008:162). Then, Mr. Ashok's family also describes having some social relation with distinguish and educated people such as lawyer, cabinet minister, and politician. (Adiga, 2008:87). From those evidences, it indicates that Mr. Ashok's family is divided upper class which has power in society due to his economic power and also education power.

Whereas, the lower class includes of driver and servant, comes from the Darkness city, people who cannot continue their study, and live in poverty condition which hanging out of economy to their employer. "Has there ever been a master-servant relationship like this one?, he is so powerless" (Adiga, 2008:159). This class is represented by Mr. Ashok's servants namely Ram Bahadur, and Ram Persad. They have been social status higher than Balram because their caste is higher than Halwai caste. Then, their position in Mr. Ashok's house also more dominant due to their job experience is longer than Balram.

Based on the elaboration above, Balram Halwai and his family is considered as the proletariat (working class) which has been elaborated in the previous chapter. Balram and also the other Mr. Ashok's servants occupy lower caste in India because of the identity. As the division of caste which has been elaborated before there are four castes which exist in India. Balram and the other servants are divided as *Shudra* caste because they are only a servant. While Mr. Ashok's family is divided as *Kshatria* caste, because they are the owner of the land,

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and educated people. It can be concluded that Balram's family, and the other servants is lower class or ruled class (proletariat), and Mr. Ashok's family is upper class or ruling class (bourgeoisie).

Lifestyle Contrast between Upper and Lower Class

In this novel, Adiga depict the contrast of life style between upper and lower class. Life style which is carried by Mr. Ashok's family is the best life style based on their class. It is proved that they only drink the whiskey which having best quality ever, named Black Dog. "Black Dog was the first name in first name in first-class category of whiskey. It was the only thing that the Stork and his sons drank"(Adiga, 2008: 64). The appetite to drink whiskey is cannot be separated to their life style. It is firm by Stork "Ah...whiskey, how would we survive in this country without it"(Adiga, 2008:60). From that quotation, means that the life style of upper class is consume kind of food or beverage which is expensive and high quality, because everything which they eat or drink symbolizes their prestige.

Then, the upper class is also marked by the way they dressed, it totally different with the lower class dressed. When going to mall, Mr. Ashok as the representation of upper class, wearing white T-shirt with the little picture exist in the middle, and black shoes. For Balram, as the representation of lower class, he thinks that it is not clothes that will he chooses when go shopping. Balram says "It was like no T-shirt I would ever choose to buy at a store, I would have bought something more colorful, with lots of words and designs on it, better value on money"(Adiga, 2008:126-127). Based on that utterance, it shows that Balram's thought in style is still conservative; he thinks that it vainly spends money to buy clothes in simple style. It shows that the life condition which he experiences within poverty makes his thought narrow toward life style, in his mind only how to earn money and use it wisely. It is different with the upper class thought that everything simple is more beautiful than over.

Lower class which includes driver and servant, they prefer to read magazine entitled *Murder Weekly*. That magazine is sold in every bookstall in Delhi, displayed between two-bit novels, and become popular reading for servant, driver, gardener, baby sitter, and others. "... Murder Weekly, since our prime minister certainly won't tell you anything about it. It's sold in every newsstands in the city, alongside the cheap novels, and it is very popular reading among all the servants, cooks, ..." (Adiga, 2008:104). This magazine usually sold just four and a half rupees so that poor people can buy it, it publishes weekly. Every published, the drivers buy it and share with the other drive to spent time while waiting for the employer who is getting party or shopping.

Aravind Adiga also portrays that drivers are forbidden to come in mall, they spend time by sitting in parking area to chat, smoke, and others while waiting for his employer. Usually, the drivers often do that is described in following narration: "chitchatting and scratching your groin, you can read murder and rape magazines. You can develop the chauffeur's habit, it is kind of yoga, really of putting a finger in your nose and letting your mind go blank for hours (they should call it the "bored driver's asana"). You can sneak a bottle of Indian liquor into the car boredom makes drunks of so many honest drivers" (Adiga, 2008:126). From that quotation, Adiga depicts that Balram often scratches his groin and chews *paan*, it is bad habit which reflect to the lower class. It has been done by Balram for many years. It is kind of animal habit which is inappropriate to do by people. Means that lower class still do not have good ethic in behave.

Balram Halwai's Struggle to Get Better Life

Aravind Adiga portrays the efforts which are done by Balram to get better life; he has some strategies to improve his life condition. Balram as the main character which is described cannot continue his study in his past encourages him to get much information outside the world of education. If many children get the knowledge from book and school, otherwise Balram tries

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to get information from listening people's talk in order to he can know about the new news about social situation which is happened. In this case, the activity of listening-thieving is the first effort which he does to improve his life by having knowledge and information in his mind. This evidence can be seen in this following narration " and it was at the tea shop in this city built by coal, while sweeping the table and lingering to overhear a conversation, that may life changed" (Adiga, 2008:44). Balram hopes by this effort, at least he can find way to out of his bad condition, and get the better position in social structure.

The second effort which is done by Balram is benefitting an opportunity, like determined to be a driver of Mr. Ashok. Apparently, becoming a driver is not make his life changed because in Mr. Ashok's house, he is as new servant should defer to the other senior of servant such as Ram Bahadur and Ram Persad. However, one day Balram benefitting a opportunity when he knows about Ram's identity that actually he is Moslem, he counterfeit his identity as Hindu man in order to can get a job. "A great film, Sir. Lots of dancing. Hero was a Moslem, name of Mohammad" (Adiga, 2008). It is Ram Persad's utterance; it shows that he is a Moslem. After his identity is revealed, he retires from his Job, and this opportunity is benefited well by Balram, so that he finally becomes a number one of servant. Balram's effort to go out from Laxamangarh to Delhi is the advancement of his life. New Delhi is capital city which is a good place for getting a high salary for Balram.

The third effort is Adapted his lifestyle to imitate the Upper classes' lifestyle. In this part, Adiga describes that Balram drinks a whiskey, stop to chew paan then choose to use a tooth paste, and stop to scratch his groin, he also buys a simple T-shirt as Mr. Ashok has. This evidence of it can be seen in this following utterance "I kept saying to each shirt he showed me...in toothpastes that canceled out the effects of paan"(Adiga, 2008:127). By the action to imitate his employer's life style, as the one of the ways of making a change in his life, Balram is told spitting in this part; it can be assumed that this action is the way to throw up his past.

The fourth effort which bearing in his mind is how to get much money in order to he can get economic power which can arise his caste. In this part, it is told that Balram is killed Mr. Ashok due to some reason, such as injustice toward him, he is often behaved as an animal. It forces him to do the bad action. He also run away for much rupee and Honda city, this evidence can be seen in page 246 (Adiga, 2008). This killing action which is done by Balram is depicted as the protest of Balram as the representation of lower class which is behaved arbitrariness by the upper class. It can be meant that this action is Balram's struggle against injustice of the caste system and also poverty.

After killing Mr. Ashok, finally Balram run away to Bangalore with his cousin named Dharam. In Bangalore, Structure social which is had by Balram has been changed. Furthermore, in Bangalore Balram builds a company, in the beginning he buys a Toyota Quails car which is rented out, the evidence can be read in the page 256, "...I did was to goto Toyota Quails dealer in the city..."(Adiga, 2008). Then he decides to make a relation with polices which he considers can help him to smoothen his business. "...went to the nearest police station... and make sure the policeman saw the red bag by swinging it lot, and give him a business card which just I had printed"(Adiga, 2008:257). Henceforth, Balram in Bangalore has economic power and becomes an upper class.

He changed his name as Ashok Sharma, it indicates that Balram successes drawing ahead toward his poverty in the past. He draws a new class from lower to upper due to the economic power, and he also jumps from the *shudra* to *ksatria* caste. This novel actually conveys a critique toward the hard of caste system which cannot changed, it deconstructs by the character of Balram which successes to get high caste than before. He has proved that he is unbound of the destiny. He is described as the character which is able to run away from the

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fate which is determined by society through caste system. He successes deconstructing the structure of social culture which is spread out in Hindu Indian society.

CONCLUSSION

In conclusion, based on the explanation in the previous chapter, it indicates that the novel entitled *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga tries to portray the social problem which happens in Indian society. Through the main character named Balram Halwai, Adiga depicts the Marxist critics about the social classes which are shaped based on the economic power. In this novel, it finds that Balram Halwai and his family are considered as the lower class, and Mr. Ashok's family is the upper class. It also describes the different life style which happens among them.

This study applies Marxism theory which focuses on structure of social classes and class struggle to reveal the phenomena of Indian Caste system which is depicted in this novel. Furthermore, Balram Halwai and his efforts to get better life finally become true. The summit of the effort is killing his employer and run away for much rupee and car, it is the form of class struggle which is done by Balram as the representation of lower class which is behaved arbitrariness by the upper class. It is kind of the struggle against poverty and also injustice in Indian Caste system.

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