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FILE	FINZA_-_JURNAL_PDF.PDF (312.83K)	WORD COUNT	1435
TIME SUBMITTED	02-AUG-2020 10:28AM (UTC+0700)	CHARACTER COUNT	14644
SUBMISSION ID	1364872263		

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN MASAJI ISHIKAWA'S *"A RIVER IN DARKNESS"*

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ABSTRACT

This thesis entitled **RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN MASAJI ISHIKAWA'S "A RIVER IN DARKNESS"** is a study about social life of Japanese people who live in North Korea and face racial discrimination depicted through the story and characters in this novel. There are two questions to be answered in this research: The basis of Racial Discrimination that occurs in the novel and The types of discrimination experienced by Masajias the main character of stories. The aims of this research is to analyze the basis and types of racial discrimination reflected in the novel through the main character in North Korea. The writer uses theories from Theodorson (1979) and Pettigrew (2016) to describe how the racial discrimination happens to Japanese people who emigrate to North Korea. This research uses descriptive method, with extrinsic approaches are applied in this research. The result shows that first, discrimination has given a big impact to Japanese people in North Korea who face endless social discrimination and oppression. Second, there are types of direct and indirect discrimination which limit the scope of work, residence and facilities against Masaji and immigrants as a minority who live in North Korea.

Keywords : *Racial Discrimination, Immigrant, Majority Group, Minority Group*

INTRODUCTION

Racial discrimination is an act or behavior that treat differently a particular community or ethnic group caused by differences in skin color.

According to Wellek and Warren (1977), the acts of racial discrimination is caused by history, the development of socio-cultural and situational,

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personality and beliefs and religion in an individual or community groups. The phenomenon of racial discrimination that often occurs in the community is discrimination against skin color, ethnic groups, and also minority groups.

Racial discrimination is indeed one of the scourges that often appears in everyday life, anywhere, even in various parts of the world. The fact of social phenomena is indeed often the case, even this phenomenon does not only occur in the community or in human life. According to (Abrams & Harpham, 2012) the phenomenon also exists in the novel aims to raise the facts or a history that is true in the community. Although the novel is only a literary work that is classified as mere fiction, it is not uncommon in it to contain many phenomena that reflect human life.

A River In Darkness tells the life of the main character who face racial discrimination since he migrated from Japan to North Korea. The setting of this situation is in North Korea, where racial discrimination experienced by the main characters in the novel is caused by a history of hostility between Japan and North Korea. Of course cases of racial discrimination certainly often occur in the community, even this case has existed since World War II. Racial discrimination is caused by history, and the act of racial discrimination in an individual or community is caused by differences In religion, skin color, ethnic

group, and minority group, Wellek and Warren (1977).

The writer takes the theme of racial discrimination contained in Masaji Ishikawa's *A River In Darkness*. Because this novel contains issue of racial discrimination, where we know that this kind of social problem is a case that often occurs within our scope, and until now racial discrimination is still happened. As contained in the novel, North Korean people as a majority group against Japanese people who are a minority group in North Korea. The acts of discrimination include harassment, slavery against immigrants, especially Japanese people who are a minority in the country. The writer wants to analyze the basis and types of racial discrimination contained in Masaji Ishikawa's *A River In Darkness*. The writer is interested to study the treatment of discrimination committed by North Korea people against Masaji Ishikawa's as the main character in this novel where he is the minority groups in North Korea, then the types of discrimination that reflected in Masaji Ishikawa's *A River In Darkness*. This study is also intended to uncover the effects experienced by Japanese people who are in North Korea.

There are two theses by University of 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya students that discuss about it. However, none of them study about racial discrimination, because racial



discrimination has different treatment. Choirunnisak (2013) discusses about how racism presented in Stephanie Mayer's "Breaking Dawn" by focusing on the racism actions such as stereotyping, prejudice, oppression, and violence to name some of them. Puspita Mindari Subagyo (2016) discusses about impact of racism gender roles in Amiri Baraka's by analyze both of the character Lula and Clay. So the aim of this study is to give an example of racial discrimination in literary work. In other words, the writer hopes this thesis will become a great

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses descriptive research methods, because in this research the data taken by the writer are in the form of sentences. Descriptive method is one of the type of research method that is uses to describe and explore about setting social, social phenomenon or reality by describing a unit or variable related to a problem examined in the study. The purpose of research uses descriptive methods is to accurately describe a group, mechanism, a process, present information and create categories and classify research subjects in this study.

Data sources are all information or subjects that would be collected and selected by research. The data source in this study is the novel Entitled A River In

contribution towards the world of literary study, especially in the field of racial discrimination analysis. Based on the background above, this study has two problems to answer:

1. What is the basis of discrimination that occurs in the novel *A River In Darkness* ?
2. What is the type of discrimination experienced by Masaji's in the novel *A River In Darkness* ?

Darkness on 2018. The novel is 159 pages long, which is divided into 6 chapters. This research will focus on racial discrimination to the Japanese people who emigrated to North Korea and what the effect to them who face discrimination.

DATA ANALYSIS

Racial discrimination reflected in Masaji Ishikawa's *A River In Darkness*. The discussion is divided into two subchapters. The first subchapter discusses about the basis of racial discrimination in Masaji Ishikawa's *A River In Darkness* by using Theodorson (1979) theory to analyze the basis of racial discrimination in this novel, and the second subchapter discusses the type of discrimination experienced by



Masaji using Pettigrew (2016) theory to categorize the type of discrimination

that occurs in the novel.

The Basis of Racial Discrimination

1. Ethnic

The first category in the analysis of the basis of discrimination is ethnicity. In Masaji Ishikawa's *A River In Darkness*, problems that arise or acts of discrimination that are reflected in this novel experienced by the main characters in the novel are acts of ethnic discrimination. This action refers to an object, the object is a minority group where they are migrants. The majority groups of a place will act unfairly or treat the minority groups with different treatment and tend to be rude because of ethnic differences. Based on the opinion of Theodorson, "Minority groups are groups that suffer losses due to prejudice, as well as groups that are recognized based on ethnicity, religion, and of course race" Theodorson & Theodorson (1979: 258).

Based on the story in this novel, the acts of discrimination experienced by Masaji is ethnicity discrimination. This is reflected through harassment based on differences in ethnic groups reflected in the novel. Represented by a number of students at Masaji's new school in North

Korea, where on his first day of school, Masaji who greetings some of his new friends and answered greetings from the teacher who welcomed him, Masaji also hears some children around him whispering and scoffing at Masaji as not being called appropriate. This can be seen in the quotation below:

There were no first-day-of-school photographs for the family archive. When I walked in, I saw about a hundred pupils and teachers gathered in a single room. I greeted them in my clumsy Korean.

"Thank you for welcoming me."

"Japanese bastard!" someone muttered.

And then everyone seemed to be whispering the words. "Japanese bastard!" (Isikawa,2018:28)

2 Social-Class Membership

The next category in the analysis of racial discrimination is social-class membership that is reflected in Masaji Ishikawa's *A River In Darkness*. Forms of



social-class membership discrimination often occur in the social sphere which is masterminded by the majority group which limits the movement of minority groups to be isolated. Victims of discrimination in the form of social-class membership are reflected in the novel through Masaji's as the main character. In other words, the analysis in this subchapter uses Theodorson theory. Based on this, Theodorson (1979: 115) writes that racial discrimination is committed by the majority against minorities by treating groups of people or groups unfairly, and forms of racial discrimination such as generalizing certain groups such as race, religion, ethnicity and also social-class membership.

According to the novel, the arrival of Masaji and immigrants from Japan at the port are welcomed directly by several North Koreans to help immigrants unload their luggage. To his surprise, Masaji saw North Koreans helping them to wear clothes that were far from their standards. The country which was previously described as heaven does not reflect like heaven in general. This can be seen in the following quotation:

When we pulled up to the quay, several North Koreans came on board to help with our disembarkation. Their clothes, their shoes, everything about them, made it clear at once that these denizens of paradise were infinitely poorer

than we'd ever been during our tough life in Japan. (Ishikawa,2018:24)

Masaji, who are shocked at this, was eager to return to Japan. However, his father tried to keep Masaji calm by slowly pushing Masaji's shoulder to keep going and not looking back. This symbolizes the lowest social class in North Korean society with evidence that what North Koreans wear is poorer than people in Japan as well as being a benchmark for a picture of life that is not as expected.

Types of Racial Discrimination

The type of discrimination is divided into several categories or types including direct and indirect discrimination

1 Direct Discrimination

The first analysis of the types of discrimination in this category is direct discrimination. This phenomenon of direct discrimination often occurs in every society, the occurrence of an act of direct discrimination contained in the novel *A River In Darkness* is reflected through the main characters in this novel. So this analysis uses Pettigrew's theory of direct discrimination. According to Pettigrew (2005), there are restrictions in certain areas in the scope of social life such as restrictions on public facilities, restrictions on the field of work, which is making decisions



through prejudice against certain groups. In his book titled *Racial Discrimination* (2016), Pettigrew argues that direct discrimination is an act that is done consciously and deliberately which is directly affected at the points of inequality produced. The analysis of direct discrimination reflected in the novel *A River In Darkness* can be seen in the following discussion

"The house that we were destined to call home was being used as a party office. It was the village's only building with a tiled roof. Our guide became excited, almost hysterical, as he pointed it out. Apparently, it was "a great honor to live in such a house." I looked at the thing in all its jerry-rigged glory, its walls riddled with cracks. I was puzzled. Did he really believe what he was saying? If so, I could almost have wept for him. Except that I was the one who had to live there." (Ishikawa,2018:26)

The North Korean government in this case through the reception center has broken the rules, neglected in fulfilling its promises to provide a decent life. Thus, it is clear that there is direct discrimination by the North Korean government in the form of restrictions on public facilities against immigrant groups who are a minority group. Masaji can only accept what is given to him without complaining, but of course it has a direct impact on Masaji and other immigrants. It can be seen in the sentence "It was the village's only

building with a tiled roof" and in the sentence "I looked at the thing in all its jerry-rigged glory, its walls riddled with cracks". From this sentence shows a picture of oppression in the form of categorization of dwellings and restrictions on public facilities where this leads to the type of direct discrimination.

2 Indirect Discrimination

The next analysis is an analysis for indirect discrimination. The acts of indirect discrimination against minorities are initiated from the development of direct discrimination. Pettigrew say that this act of indirect discrimination was an act or form of developing direct discrimination that resulted in the enlargement of the original injury. Pettigrew in *Liliweri* book (2005: 221) also argues, acts of indirect discrimination carried out by someone through policies made aimed at preventing a certain race and ethnicity from associating with other races and ethnicities independently and causing systematic harm to community groups certain. An analysis of the types of indirect discrimination in Masaji Ishikawa's *A River In Darkness* will be discussed as follows.

The form of indirect discrimination in Masaji Ishikawa's *A River In Darkness* is reflected when Masaji feels in love



with a beautiful nineteen-year-old woman named Rim Su-yon. Masaji is on the farm at the time when Masaji is sending grass using a tractor. Day after day passes, Masaji and Su-yon often meet and talk, but Masaji is afraid to express his feelings for Su-yon. In the end they are reunited, Su-yon gave Masaji a pair of shorts made of white nylon. Masaji is impressed and he immediately invite Su-yon to marry him. But Su-yon could not answer directly, she also want Masaji to ask Su-yon's mother permission if Masaji was serious about getting married. Arriving at Su-yon's house, Masaji found rejection from Su-yon's mother because of ethnic and racial differences. This can be seen in the quotation below:

Her mother remained silent for a moment, looking grave. My heart was racing, beating so fast, it felt like it was going to gallop away without me. "I'm sorry to say...a Japanese husband for my daughter...well, that wouldn't be acceptable, I'm afraid." She looked as though she felt guilty about her decision. I sensed that she was casting about for an explanation that would somehow assuage me. "You see, the thing is...Well, I'm sure you're a perfectly upstanding young man... I mean, I know you are. But the thing is...if my daughter married a returnee, well, we'd be in a dangerous situation too, you see. (Ishikawa,2018:63)

Masaji, who is devastated by this,

left Su-yon's house. The action taken by Su-yon's mother against Masaji as Japanese that shows in the sentence "I'm sorry to say... a Japanese husband for my daughter" and "If my daughter married a returnee, well, we'd be in dangerous situation too, you see". is an act of Indirect discrimination. Where there are actions to limit and prevent their children from marrying people who are ethnically different from their families. So that Masaji experience a slump in his life because he could not achieve what he wanted even though it was in sight. This had a direct impact on Masaji, and he no longer want to fall in love again. This action is classified into indirect discrimination, because there are restrictions on not having relations with different ethnicities.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study it reveals that Masaji is a victim of injustice and violence from the people of North Korea and the Kim Il-sung regime. Violence and discriminatory acts by Koreans clearly illustrate the situation in that era. North Korea's majority group labels Masaji as an enemy and also as a weak ethnic Japanese minority group. Masaji experiences a lot of violence and racial discrimination living in North Korea. The violence and acts of discrimination experienced by Masaji as



a minority in his novel *A River In Darkness* include discrimination with the basis of ethnicity, social-class membership, and with the type of direct and indirect discrimination. The prejudices arising from North Korean people make Masaji's life very depressed, not only that, the prejudices make Masaji experience various kinds of acts of discrimination.

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