

**Perlakuan Taliban terhadap Perempuan sebagai Pelanggaran Nilai-Nilai Demokrasi dan Hak-Hak Azasi Manusia di dalam Novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* Karya Khaled Hosseini**  
***(Taliban's Treatments toward Women as Violation the Democratic Values and Human Rights in Khaled Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns)***

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**Abstrak**

*A Thousand Splendid Suns* adalah novel kedua dari Khaled Hosseini. Dia adalah seorang Afghan yang pindah ke Amerika karena mendapatkan suaka politik. Sehingga, cara dia berfikir terhadap suatu fenomena dipengaruhi oleh cara pandang masyarakat Amerika. Ketika dia melihat kehidupan perempuan di bawah resim Taliban yang tidak memiliki kebebasan atas hidupnya sendiri, dia kecewa. Berdasarkan cara pandang keAmerikaannya, perlakuan Taliban pada perempuan itu dianggap sebagai suatu pelanggaran nilai-nilai Amerika khususnya demokrasi dan hak-hak azasi manusia. Oleh karena itu, di dalam novelnya *A Thousand Splendid Suns* terungkap ketidaksetujuannya terhadap Taliban dalam memperlakukan perempuan. Ada tiga pertanyaan dalam studi ini, pertama, pertanyaan mengenai macam-macam perlakuan apa saja yang didapatkan oleh perempuan dari Taliban yang terlihat di dalam novel. Kedua, pertanyaan tentang nilai-nilai Amerika apa yang mempengaruhi Hosseini dalam menulis novelnya. Ketiga, pertanyaan tentang alasan mengapa perlakuan Taliban pada perempuan dianggap sebagai pelanggaran nilai-nilai Amerika. Hasil dari studi ini menunjukkan bahwa novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* adalah alat penegosiasian dan penyebaran nilai-nilai Amerika terhadap para pembaca.

**Kata Kunci:** Taliban, demokrasi, hak-hak azasi manusia, dan hegemoni.

**Abstract**

*A Thousand Splendid Suns* is Khaled Hosseini's second novel. He was an Afghan who moved to America because he got a political asylum. Therefore, his way of thinking toward a phenomenon is influenced by the American perspective. When he sees the woman's life under the Taliban regime who does not have freedom toward their own life, he feels disappointed. Based on his American view, the Taliban's treatments toward the women are considered as violation the American values especially democracy and human rights. Hence, in his novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* expressed his disapproval toward the Taliban in treating the women. There are three questions in this study, firstly, the question about what kinds of treatments that the women get from the Taliban that seen in the novel. Secondly, the question about what American values that influence him in writing his novel. Lastly, the question about the reason why Taliban's treatments toward the women are considered as violation on the American values. The result of this study shows that *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is a means of negotiating and spreading the American values to the readers.

**Key words:** Taliban, democracy, human rights and hegemony.

**Introduction**

Democracy has principles, such as respecting equality, and human rights. Equality means that all individuals have equal rights, and they must not be discriminated because of their races, religions, ethnic groups, and gender. Furthermore, democracy respects the human rights of the citizens. Human rights mean the values which are connected with the respect to human freedom such as freedom of expression, association, assembly, and

the rights to get safe life (Beetham and Boyle, 2004:21-24). Moreover, American bill of rights is freedom guaranteed to all people in the democratic country. Its function is to protect citizens from the abuse of the power of other individuals and the government (Beetham and Boyle, 2004:155-156).

Unfortunately, the female characters in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, a novel by an Afghan-American writer, Khaled Hosseini, do not have freedom. The women under the Taliban regime are limited to get education, prohibited

to mobile freely, restricted to access healthcare, and banned to get a job.

Seeing the woman's condition in Afghanistan, Hosseini feels very disappointed. It is because the women are oppressed under the Taliban regime. He believes the values of democracy and human rights that he has adopted in American society, so he thinks that the Taliban's treatments toward the Afghan women are considered as violation on those values. Therefore, he creates *A Thousand Splendid Suns* to express his disagreement to the Taliban's treatments toward the women. Furthermore, he uses his novel as a means of negotiating and spreading the American values to his readers in this world.

In addition, I am interested to use *A Thousand Splendid Suns* as my object of discussion because the novel is one of the literary works of the writer's *New York Times Bestseller* in America that tells about the women's oppression under the Taliban regime, furthermore the social background of Hosseini in American society that influences him in writing the women's life under the Taliban regime is important to discuss, because it is helpful to know Hosseini's aim in writing the novel.

### Research Methodology

In this study I apply qualitative research method, because I want to interpret the data of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* for knowing Hosseini's way of thinking toward the Taliban in treating the women in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the term of qualitative data is a type of data that deals with collecting and analyzing information in a form of non-numeric (Blaxter, et al, 1996:60). There are two types of the data, primary and secondary data. The information about the women's oppression under the Taliban regime in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is the primary data. Furthermore, the information about the social background of Hosseini in America, the American values especially democracy and human rights that influence Hosseini's way of thinking, and the history of Taliban regime are the secondary data of this research.

The main data are collected from library and internet research. Library research provides the data needed for the object of the study. The data and other supporting information are gathered from books because the data sources from various books give information for the progress of the notion discussed. Moreover, internet provides periodicals used in this study. The primary source of this research is Hosseini's novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. The secondary sources of this study are divided into three categories. Firstly, the source that is related to the information about the social background of Hosseini is taken from internet website (<http://www.achievement.org/autodoc/page/hosbio>) accessed on March, 6<sup>th</sup> 2012. Secondly, the sources that are related to the information about American values especially democracy and human rights are taken from books: *Demokrasi, Sejarah, Praktik dan Dinamika Pemikiran* (2006) by Daniel Sparingga, *Demokrasi dan Demokratisasi*

(2006) by Supriyadi, *Perihal Demokrasi* (2001) by Robert A. Dahl, and *A Dictionary of Human Rights* (1997) by David Robertson. Lastly, the source that is related to the information about the history of Taliban regime is taken from a book entitled *Taliban, Oil, and the New Great Game in Central Asia* (2002) by Ahmed Rashid.

Dey (cited in Gray, 2004: 327) states that "analysis involves the process of breaking down into smaller units to reveal their characteristic elements and structure". Every literary research needs a suitable method that is used to analyze the content of a literary work. Dealing with that, I use inductive method to analyze the data. Based on Shaw, the inductive research starts from a specific explanation to the general explanation about certain things (1972: 201). This research begins with the analysis of the novel. In analyzing the content of the novel, I use Wellek and Warren's concepts. Based on Wellek and Warren, the sociology of the writer influences his literary work (1956: 95-96). Hosseini's way of thinking is influenced by the American perspective therefore through his novel he states his opinion about his disagreement toward Taliban in treating the women to the readers. He is the agent of his society to spread the American values especially democracy and human rights to the readers. Furthermore, I use Gramsci's hegemony theory because the purpose of the research is to analyze a role of a writer that is assumed as the hegemonic agent or intellectual who has function to negotiate and spread the dominant's class ideology to the readers. In this case, Hosseini, an author who is simultaneously the hegemonic agent or intellectual has important role to negotiate and spread the dominant class's ideology to his readers through his literary work. Therefore, the research can be assumed that *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is Hosseini's means of negotiating and spreading the values of democracy and human rights to the readers.

### Result

American society with the values of democracy and human rights as the social background of Hosseini. Therefore, the American view influences his way of thinking toward a phenomenon. When he knows the women's life under the Taliban regime who do not have freedom toward their own life, he is very sad. Based on his American perspective, the Taliban's treatments on women are considered as violation on the American values that he believes strongly. Hence, he writes *A Thousand Splendid Suns* to express his disagreement toward Taliban in treating the women. Therefore, the result of the study shows that his novel is a means of negotiating and spreading the American values to the readers in the world.

### Discussion

Through the novel, Hosseini tries to show the reality in Afghanistan that is about Taliban's bad treatments toward the women. The women under the Taliban regime are limited to get education, prohibited to mobile freely,

restricted to access healthcare, and banned to get a job. The treatments are considered as violation on the values of democracy and human rights that he believes and keeps in his mind. He thinks that every woman must get their freedom, therefore the women in Afghanistan must get their freedom to do things that they think better for their life. Unfortunately, they do not have freedom under the Taliban regime.

Firstly, the Afghan people under the Taliban regime are limited to get education, such as they are prohibited to read any other reading materials except Koran. The people must only read Koran, if they do not want to get punishment from Taliban. The prohibition for people to read the other reading books except Koran can be seen in the novel when the people's reading books are burned by the Taliban, the peoples' book stores and the woman's schools are closed by the Taliban. Everybody has the right to get education to improve their knowledge in any sources. It means that the Taliban must not destroy the people's reading materials because the people must educate themselves to make their life better by reading many books.

The women under the Taliban regime are also restricted to learn things, because they can only learn domestic knowledge. The restriction for women to learn common things can be seen in the novel when Aziza, Laila's daughter, and the other female children must hide when they want to learn geography, history of science and etc. They can only learn certain things, such as how to knit. If the Taliban knows that there are women learning the other disciplines, the Taliban will give them punishment. The Taliban must let them to learn everything that they think better for their life, because they must be smart to survive in this world.

Secondly, the women under Taliban regime are prohibited to mobile freely, such as they are forbidden to go outside without their husbands or male relatives. Therefore, the women must be accompanied with their husbands or their male relatives, when they want to go everywhere. The women must obey the rules, if they do not want to get punishment from Taliban. The prohibition for women to travel alone can be seen in the novel when Laila, Rasheed's second wife, is found by Taliban travel alone, therefore Taliban beats and sends her home. However, Taliban must not forbid them to go outside alone, because they have freedom to travel everywhere alone or with someone else.

The women must also wear *burqa*. According on Webster's dictionary (1966), *burqa* is "a loose enveloping garment with usually veiled eyeholes that is worn in public by Muslim women". Thus, the women who wear *burqa* will not be able to be looked, because their bodies are covered except their eyes. The women must wear *burqa*, when they go everywhere and in any circumstance. The obligation for women to wear *burqa* is based on Taliban's *syari'a*. Therefore, the Taliban will give punishment for the women who do not obey the rule. The obligation for women to wear *burqa* can be seen in the novel when the doctor must wear *burqa*, even though she does Laila's operation. In certain situation, the Taliban must give the doctor chance to open

her *burqa*. Thus, the Taliban must give them punishment, because she helps other people's life.

Thirdly, health is very important for everyone, so every man and woman should get good medical treatment and healthcare. Unfortunately, the women under the Taliban get lack of medical treatment and healthcare. The lack of medical treatment and healthcare for women can be seen in the novel when Laila wants to give birth of her second child, Zalmai. She must wait for her turn, because the doctor in the female hospital is only two. The female hospital also has limited medical equipment, therefore Laila is operated without any anesthesia. The Taliban must aware that everyone must get good medical treatment when they are sick, and each hospital must have good medical equipment to help the patients.

Lastly, the women under the Taliban regime are banned to get a job by the Taliban. The prohibition for women to work is based on the Taliban's *syari'a*. The women must stay home, and they are not allowed to work except doing household work, such as cooking, cleaning home, keeping the children and etc. The prohibition for women to work can be seen in the novel when Mariam and Laila can only wait Rasheed their husband in home, and do the household work. Everybody has right to advance their ability, so Afghan women must not be forbidden to get a job. It is because the women can usually show their ability to society when they work. If the women work, they will get income. Thus, they can help their husbands to get more income.

The Taliban's treatments toward the women above are considered as violation on the values of democracy and human rights that Hosseini adopts and believes in American society. According on his American perspective, everybody has freedom for life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness, so they can do things that are good for them. In American democratic country, the human freedom is respected, and to respect the human freedom, a law is made to protect it. Therefore, the women must get their freedom to make their life better without being restricted by Taliban and Taliban must not treat the women badly.

Therefore, Hosseini creates the novel as his disagreement toward Taliban in treating the women. He uses his novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, as his tool to show his readers in the world that Taliban's treatments toward Afghan women are not true, because the women under the Taliban are oppressed. Therefore, he writes many kinds of Afghan women's suffering during the Taliban's regime in his novel.

Furthermore, I uses Gramsci's hegemony theory to analyze a role of writer who is assumed as a hegemonic apparatus. Influenced by Marx's ideology, Gramsci thinks that the world of idea, culture, and superstructure, are not only the expression or reflection of economic class that seem as material but also as one of material power itself (Faruk: 1999: 62). It means that as material power, world of idea or ideology is functioned as a tool for organizing people and creating a field for people to move on it. Thus, the relationship between the ideal and material are not working hand in hand, but more likely dependent and



interactive. The material power is content, while the ideology is the form of the material power (Faruk: 1999: 62). In other words, the material power will not be able to understand without the form, and the ideology only becomes individual fantasy without the support of the material power. Furthermore, the ideology does not only belong to an individual but also communal. Ideology is a system of ideas that has material power to manifest the human life, such as the way of thinking, and practical act of human when they face phenomena in reality, and the tools of ideology can be institutions, organization, and places where the social practices happen (Patria cited in Yuliana, 2012:10). Besides, the main conceptual idea of hegemony is addressed to how the a class and its members run their power in controlling the subordinate class by doing repression and persuasion. The repression of the dominant class toward subordinate class is usually run by police, military, and judge, while the persuasion is implemented to make the dominant's class ideology can influence the way of thinking of the subordinate class (Adamson cited in Yuliana, 2012:10). Therefore, a writer can be considered as a hegemonic apparatus who has function of negotiating and spreading the dominant's class ideology to the subordinate class. In this case, Hosseini, an author who is simultaneously as a hegemonic apparatus has important role of negotiating and spreading the American values to his readers through his novel. In other words, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is created as his means of negotiating and spreading the values of democracy and human rights to the readers in the world.

### Conclusion

Khaled Hosseini believes and keeps in his mind that the values of democracy and human rights are true, therefore the values influence him in seeing a phenomenon. He believes that everybody has basic rights from the Creator, and none can take them. Unfortunately, the women's life under the Taliban are oppressed. They do not have freedom toward their own life, and it makes him worried about it. Based on his American view, the Taliban's treatments toward the women are considered as violation on the American values that he believes strongly. Therefore, in his novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* expressed his disagreement toward Taliban in treating the women. In conclusion, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* as his means of negotiating and spreading the American values to his readers in the world.

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