



Economic Inequality in the Postcolonial Era in Andrea Hirata's Padang Bulan Novel

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Abstract

This research is based on the view that literature is basically a reflection of reality, including social reality. The reality that becomes a picture in Indonesia is family poverty which is a picture of the perspective in Indonesia in the novel Padang Bulan by Andrea Hirata. The theory underlying this research is the sociology of literature. The research method used in this study is qualitative descriptive method. The source of data in this study is novel. The technique used to obtain data using the read-record technique. The results of this study show that there is economic inequality in the form of poverty and social class by Belitung families which is one of the reflections in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Literature, Novel; Sociology of Literature; Social; Poverty*

Introduction

Literary works are a medium for authors to express and express ideas resulting from contemplation about the meaning and nature of life experienced, felt and witnessed. An author as one of the creative and selective members of society wants to express his experience in everyday community life to his connoisseurs (Tarigan in Al-Ma'ruf, 2017: 1). Literature is a reflection of social life expressed by literati with sharpness of feelings and deep thinking power so that it can capture great values and thoughts that are more far-reaching than the general layman's view (Al-Ma'ruf, 2017: 2).

Literary works of fiction tell various problems of human life in their interaction with themselves, and their interaction with God (Nurgiyantoro, 2005: 3). Basically, literary works are fictional literary works constructed on the basis of reality, for example about a portrait of life that contains a reflection of real life that gives rise to social nature in humans. Through novels, authors try to provide a picture of the reality of life through stories. Novel is one of the literary works that tells the life of a person and is a reading that contains values that are beneficial to the life of the lower or middle class. Among the main genres of literary works, namely poetry, prose, and drama, the prosalah genre, especially novels, is considered the most dominant in displaying social elements (Ratna, 2007: 335).

The main criterion imposed on literary works is the "correctness" of the depiction, or to be portrayed. According to Wellek and Warren (in Al-Ma'ruf, 2017: 57) novels are stories that paint a picture of human life and behavior from the times at times. In line with the above opinion, Damono (in

Al-Ma'ruf, 2017: 57) states that novels are a type of literature that is fictitious, however, the storyline can be a real life experience and more deeply novels have the task of educating the reader's inner experience.

Social life that is often raised or told by writers in novels as a form of sharpness of feelings towards the surrounding life is poverty. This poverty has an impact on the problem of social inequality, one of which brings social class differences that cause certain social class people not to get the same facilities. The problem of poverty and social inequality is found in the novel *Padang Bulan* by Andrea Hirata. The novel *Padang Bulan* carries the theme of the struggle of a person who never gives up in overcoming life's difficulties. Poverty involves conditions in which a person is unable to meet the needs of his life. The current economic situation is very concerning, various problems that occur regarding community life include poverty, unemployment, and the environment.

This social reality is represented by the author in the story. This problem of poverty is illustrated in the novel *Padang Bulan* by (Hirata: 2011). In his novel, the author presents a picture of poverty based on the social reality of certain groups of people. This can also be seen from the relationship between poverty representation and the emergence of other social problems which are an illustration of the problems that are actually being faced by Indonesian society.

In this study, the author formulates a research problem to find answers regarding the description of poverty status and social inequality of the Zamzami family in the novel *Padang Bulan* by (Hirata: 2011). The purpose of this study is to obtain answers from the problem formulation that has been described previously.

This research further emphasizes literary works as a reflection of social problems of society because poverty is one of the social problems that occur in many communities. Literary works as socio-cultural documents that record the socio-cultural reality of a society at a certain time will be used as a research approach. This approach sees literary works not as a whole, but from the socio-cultural elements in them as elements that are separated from the unity of the work. This approach looks at the direct relationship between elements in the work linked to elements of society depicted in the work. The focus of attention of the sociology of literary works is on the content of literary works, objectives and other things implied in the literary work itself and related to social problems (Wellek and Warren in Wiyatmi, 2008: 20).

Research Methods

The research was conducted through words or language contained in the novel *Padang Bulan* with a qualitative descriptive approach. The object in this study is the social aspect of directing poverty and social class in the novel *Padang Bulan* by (Hirata: 2011). The form of data in this study is in the form of words, phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and discourses contained in the novel *Padang Bulan*.

The technique used to obtain data using the reading record technique, namely reading the entire novel *Padang Bulan* by (Hirata: 2011) carefully and repeatedly, especially related to speech, behavior and actions of characters. The read-note technique is carried out to gain a deep understanding of the data studied. Next, the researcher recorded the description data on a record sheet. Recording is done to make it easier for researchers to conduct analysis.

Result and Discussion

The results of research on the novel *Padang Bulan* by Andrea Hirata are presented in social life in the form of poverty and social class structure as follows:

Economic Inequality in Andrea Hirata's novel Padang Bulan

Poverty is defined as a condition in which a person is unable to maintain himself in accordance with the standard of life of the group and is also unable to utilize his mental and physical energy in the group (Soekanto, 1982: 320). According to Suharto (2009: 27-29), poverty is understood in various ways, the main understanding includes the following.

1. Material description, which includes primary daily needs, such as clothing, food, shelter, health services, and education. Limited food adequacy and quality can be seen from limited food stocks. Limited access and low quality of health services are caused by difficulty in obtaining services, low quality of services and lack of healthy living behaviors. Limited access and low quality of education services are indicated by the gap in education costs, limited educational facilities, and opportunities to obtain education.
2. Social image, including social exclusion, dependence, and inability to participate in society. Social exclusion as a result of an individual's inability to improve his life circumstances leads to inequality and dependence on others. Low community participation is shown by various cases of evictions and their non-involvement in policy formulation.
3. Income picture, including lack of income and adequate wealth associated with the amount of income with the number of family members. According to (Bappenas: 2004), poor households have an average family member greater than non-poor households.

The results of the analysis of quotes contained in the novel Padang Bulan by Andrea Hirata are as follows:

1. Poverty (Income Overview)

Poverty is defined as a condition in which a person is unable to maintain himself in accordance with the standard of life of the group and is also unable to utilize his mental and physical energy in the group or community (Soekanto, 2003: 406). Poverty in the novel Padang Bulan is experienced by the Zamzami family. The Zamzami family is a low-income family of tin miners.

"All things, in their humble family, are very predictable. Earning a few thousand rupiah panning for tin, enough to buy a few kilograms of rice, to make a living for a few days." (Hirata, 2011:3)

Zamzami is a husband of Syalimah who has left Syalimah and her children due to an accident while working. Syalimah felt the loss of a husband who was the backbone of their family so that they felt a deep economic inequality to live the next life.

"Secara mendadak kehilangan tiang penopang, keluarga Syalimah langsung limbung. Tak punya modal, tak punya keahlian, dan tak ada keluarga lain dapat diminta bantuan karena semuanya miskin membuat keluarga itu mati kutu. Tak pernah terpikir nasib sepedih itu akan menimpa mereka secara sangat tiba-tiba. Sang suami adalah tulang punggung keluarga satu-satunya dan hal itu baru disadari sepenuhnya ia tiada." (Hirata, 2011:29)

2. Education (Material Overview)

Education is closely related to poverty. Highly educated people have a better chance of getting jobs with higher wage rates compared to less educated people. The obligation of a person to work underage with less skill and abandon his education, it leads to increased unemployment and increases poverty. The opportunity to study had to stop because of the obligation to earn money felt by Enong.

“Syalimah semula menolak. Berat baginya melepaskan Enong dari sekolah dan harus bekerja jauh dari rumah. Anak itu baru kelas enam SD. Tapi akhirnya ia luluh karena Enong mengatakan tak bisa menerima jika adik-adiknya harus berhenti sekolah karena biaya. Ia sendiri rela mengorbankan sekolahnya. Ini adalah keputusan paling pahit bagi Syalimah. Putrinya tak pernah sekalipun meninggalkan kampung, kini harus berjuang menghadapi hidup yang keras di kota. Ia sendiri tak bisa mengalihkan perhatian dari tiga anak lainnya.” (Hirata, 2011:30)

“Enong sadar bahwa ia tak tampak cukup kuat untuk menjual tenaga dan tak berwajah cukup menarik untuk menjadi penjaga toko. Ia maklum pula bahwa ia tak punya selebar pun ijazah. Ia melamun, seandainya ayahnya meninggal tidak bulan lalu, tapi empat bulan setelahnya, setidaknya ia akan punya ijazah SD. Ia berkeliling kota, terus mencari kerja, lalu ia merasa haus. Di pinggir jalan ia membeli es nira. Ketika membuka tasnya, ia mendapat satu pencerahan, yaitu uang yang dibekali ibunya tinggal tujuh ratus lima puluh rupiah. Pencerahan itu lalu mengarahkannya pada satu profesi yang agung: tukang cuci pakaian.” (Hirata, 2011: 41)

3. Type of Work (Overview of Salting)

Poverty is also associated with certain types of work. The habit of finding a job in the city is also a must for someone if they want a decent job. Enong followed in the footsteps of some of her neighbor's daughters who worked in the city. This is contained in the following excerpt.

“Enong tahu beberapa anak perempuan tetangga sesama keluarga pendulang telah berangkat ke Tanjong pandan untuk bekerja sebagai penjaga toko, tukang cuci di rumah orang kaya, atau buruh pabrik. Ia berusaha meyakinkan ibunya bahwa ia bisa bekerja seperti itu. Apa susahnyanya menjaga toko? Katanya.” (Hirata, 2017:30)

4. Relation of Poverty to Gender (Women)

The relationship between poverty and gender, in Indonesia is very pronounced gender dimension in poverty, namely from several poverty indicators such as illiteracy rates, unemployment rates, workers in the informal sector and others, the female population has a more disadvantageous position than the male population (ILO in Nurwati, 2008: 6). Panning for tin is inappropriate for a woman. Even this work is not usually done by women in Enong village. Because panning for them is inevitable men, hoes and mining fields are also men. As is the case in the following quote:

“Sebaliknya, seorang perempuan mendulang timah merupakan hal yang tak mudah diterima di kampung. Mendulang adalah keniscayaan lelaki, cangkul dan ladang tambang juga lelaki.” (Hirata, 2011:71).

5. Social Structure (Social Picture)

Social structure is the whole relationship between the main social elements, the main social elements namely rules (social norms), and social layers. In *the novel Padang Bulan* there are social layers experienced by the characters. The upper social layer is experienced by Zinar, the middle social layer is experienced by Ikal, and the lower social layer is experienced by the Zamzami Family (Enong). The Shaymah (Wife of Zamzami) of the poor is found in the quotation.

“Aih, janganlah bersenda, Pak Cik. Kita ini orang miskin. Orang miskin tak kenal kejutan.” (Hirata, 2011:1)

Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that in the novel Padang Bulan by Andrea Hirata there is economic inequality that occurs in fact in Indonesia. This can be seen from the emergence of four images of economic inequality, namely poverty, education, employment, and gender. The representation of poverty with social problems in the novel seems to be interrelated. The relationship that arises is a causal relationship. The problem of the novel Padang Bulan by Andrea Hirata is that the main problems are poverty, then education, employment, poverty relations in gender (women) and social inequality, one of which is the social status experienced by the Zamzami family.

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