

DARK TIMES IN EKA KURNIAWAN'S NOVEL *BEAUTY IS A WOUND*

Nur Salaila, Asnani

Islamic University of North Sumatra, Medan, Indonesia

E-mail: salailanur14@gmail.com

Received: 2022/02/09

Accepted: 2022/05/09

Published: 2022/05/30

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to find out the dark times experiences that the protagonist undergoes in the novel *Beauty is A Wound* written by Eka Kurniawan in 2002. This novel tells the story of Dewi Ayu who is willing to be trampled by the power of the Japanese army, because Dewi Ayu wants to save her best friend's mother. Dark times is a natural feeling which, if unfelt, will stay in one's array of unresolved trauma knots. This research uses qualitative method in which the data are taken by quoting the relevant proofs from the novel then analyzing them and making the conclusion in the description forms. The findings show that the dark times undergone by the protagonist's gives negative impact to her life. The dark times period experienced by the protagonist covers violence, slavery, social status discrimination, and being a single parent. The dark period experienced by the protagonist makes her feel sad, but i, precisely, makes her much stronger to live. It is reflected here how she negotiates with the colonizers in defending his life, although, it does not stop until the end of the colonial period and she lives as a prostitute until the end of her life.

Keywords: protagonist, violence, slavery, social status discrimination, a single parent

1. Introduction

Beauty is a Wound is the first novel written by an Indonesian writer, Eka Kurniawan that was published in 2002 in collaboration with Yogyakarta Cultural Academy and Window Publisher. *Beauty is a Wound* received wide appreciation from the public, media, and literary critics. *Beauty is a Wound* tells a story during the Dutch colonial period. She is Dewi Ayu who lives in luxury. She is neither less wealthy nor less affectionate because her parents choose to leave her at their parent's house.

Dewi Ayu's fate changes drastically when the Japanese Army occupied Indonesia. Her grandfather went to expel the Japanese and died in the war. While her grandmother decided to return to Netherlands. Unfortunately, the ship carrying her grandmother had been sabotaged by the Japanese army and then sunk. As time went on, Dewi Ayu has four children, of which the three daughters are very beautiful. While the fourth has an ugly and even scary face because when she was pregnant, Dewi Ayu tried to abort the fetus. Then, her three daughters are adult and are married by the men she chooses. Then she gets a grandson from her first child and two granddaughters from her second and third daughter. All of the grandchildren are beautiful and handsome. Seeing

that her three children have got married, Dewi Ayu wants to die immediately by shutting herself up in her room and leaves his ugly fourth child with a faithful servant.

This study is concerned with the protagonist's dark times such as to be a sexual slave or a prostitute, to be a single parent and to be discriminated because of social status. The dark times experiences discussed in this research are (1) the slave is a criminal act that can involve more than one perpetrator part of the general purpose of crime. It is understood that deprivation of liberty can be carried out in a number of situations, including forced labor or reducing a person's freedom to degrading status. The elements of war crimes that often afflict women include sexual acts. In addition, slavery can also be considered a crime against humanity; this crime is part of an attack that is systematic or widespread slavery that also often forms part of inhuman acts against opposing groups. (Atikah, 2006: 154). (2) Prostitution. Prostitution is the exchange of sexual relations for money or gifts as a trafficking transaction. Prostitution is a form of crime that is prohibited in both Islamic law and positive law. In addition, prostitution is prohibited in any form, whether it is done openly or in secretly. The perpetrators of prostitution in addition to receiving harsh physical punishment also receiving moral punishment from the community in the surrounding area. (Farhana, 2017: 116). (3) The dark times are experienced might be faced by anyone, such as adults or children. These dark times originate from fear, occurring together with basic hostility, and originating from anger. Dark times are neurotic helplessness, insecurity and stresses of everyday of life for those who experience them. (Syamsu, 2009: 94). The researchers are interested in analyzing the dark times experienced in this novel because they are going to find out how dangerous the impacts of the dark times are.

2. Literature Review

Dark times is a natural feeling which, if unfelt, just stays in our array of unresolved trauma knots (Masmen, 2010:14). Together with other emotions, those feeling might go away. However, to keep such a feeling, it will periodically erupt inappropriately in one's body's attempt to rid itself or associated trauma knots (Karen, 2014:26). Based on the descriptions above, it means that dark times is a condition of being hurt. It is felt by someone in his or her body or in his mind. Shortly speaking, it is the condition of being unhappy. Dark times relate to the feelings of stress, depression, and trauma. In a wide range of empirical paradigms, dark times have been associated with more extensive and detail-oriented thinking than happiness, resulting in reductions in judgmental bias that arise from reliance on stereotypes and others simple decision heuristics. Recent research on anchoring indicates that an active thought process underlies the emergence of this bias. If people have ever felt dark times, they are likely to think more actively about the judgmental anchor than their neutral-mood counterparts and their subsequent judgments should be more likely to be assimilated toward this reference point. This prediction was confirmed in two experiments demonstrating that if people who have felt dark times are indeed more susceptible to anchoring bias than are people in a neutral mood. Moreover, this effect is generalized over judgments in positive, neutral, and negative content domains.

Chattel slavery or sexual slave is one of experiences categorizing in dark times during the war. Sexual slavery happens when someone is treated as an object to be used by a person and to dispose to other persons. When one's body is placed at the disposal of another for sexual purpose without his or her valid consent, it is a form of sexual slave (Argibay. 2003). Sexual enslavement means the exercise of any or all of the

powers attached to the “right of ownership” over a person (Bambang, 2008:119). It comprises the repeated violation or sexual abuse or forcing the victim to provide sexual services as well as the rape by the captor. The crime has the character of a continuing offence. Bambang’s definition of sexual slavery includes situations where persons are forced to domestic servitude, marriage or any other forced labor involving sexual activity, as well as the trafficking of persons, in particular women and children. The term slave itself is a condition in which there is control over someone (called a slave) by another person (Wahyudi, 2011:200). Slavery usually occurs to meet the needs for labor or sexual activity, or it can also be a group of people who are owned by someone in power, without salary and no human.

Sexual slave also refers to prostitution. The word prostitution comes from the Latin word *prostitute* which means to surrender openly to adultery (Kartini, 1992:207). Etymologically, it derives from the word *prostate* means to sell, peddle. So definition prostitution is a transaction between the female prostitute and the prostitute service user who gives some money for sexual interaction. Either sexual slave or prostitution is a form of violence. Violence in the narrow sense refers to actions in the form of attack, destruction, destruction of one's (physical) self, or something that potentially belongs to someone else. Thus, violence refers to physical actions that are personal in nature, meaning that it leads to a certain person or group that is carried out deliberately, directly, and actually. (Topo and Eva, 2003:21) Violence in a broad sense, refers to physical or psychological acts committed by a person or group of people, whether intentionally or unintentionally, directly or indirectly, personally or structurally. What is meant by structural violence is violence that occurs in a social structure, such as oppression by an authoritarian state, a system that makes social unfair, and so on. (Varia, 1997: 65).

Dark times might also refer to discrimination to someone or people either individually or in a group. Discrimination is a prejudice or behavior that differentiates a person only because he comes from a social identity (religion, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation), (Kamanto, 2004:146). Just because his social identity is different, he is seen or treated worse. For example, they are prohibited to have same legal protection or legal rights compared to other citizens of different social identities. According to (Denny, 2014:6) the meaning of discrimination is unfair and unbalanced treatment that is carried out to distinguish individuals, or groups, or distinctive attributes, based on race, ethnicity, religion, or social class membership. Discrimination is a form of injustice and is an act of violation of human rights; concubines are part of society that often experience discrimination both legally and socially. Concubines are also individuals and citizens who have human rights. Therefore, for whatever reason, concubines should not be discriminated against because the act violates human rights. (Ubed, 2002: 75-76).

Other experiences that might be included as dark times experiences are when someone should be a single parent in his or her life in which he or she should struggle herself or himself to support all the needs in their life.

A single parent is an adult man or woman who raises and takes care of a child without a partner because of the occurrence of separation in a family, whether it happens because of a divorce, or because of the death of one of the partners (Dagun, 2002: 31). Hurlock (1980: 4) states that someone who loses his partner he has to face social problems alone without his partner. Meanwhile, according to Noor (1991: 26) a single parent is someone who has to work as well as raise his child. A single parent

must fulfill the need for affection and finance, act as both mother and father, and control the anger or depression that is experienced by both the child and himself. Suryasoemitra (2007: 19) states that a single parent is someone who has to bear the burden of education and emotional burdens that should be shared with his partner. The person also has to be patient and strong physically and mentally because he has to make a living for his children. Single parent for most women is more of a choice of fate, not at all a trend to be followed. Single mother is part of a single parent. According to Sager et.al in (Duvall & Miller, 1985: 16) a single parent is a parent who looks after and raises their children without the presence and support of their partner. Cashion in (Duvall & Miller, 1985: 16) says that a single mother is a mother who is a leader in a family who looks after, educates, cares for, and becomes a guardian for her children.

3. Research Method

The research adopts qualitative research design. According to Creswell (2013 :4), qualitative research is defined as methods to explore, understand meanings ascribed to social or humanitarian problems. The qualitative research process involves important efforts, including: asking questions, procedures, collecting specific data from participants, analyzing data inductively from specific themes to general themes, and interpreting data. The perspective of research in an inductive style, focuses on individual meanings, and translates the complexity of a problem.

According to Moeloeng (2003: 47) qualitative research analysis is easier to adjust if multiple realities are found in research and is more adaptive to the many sharpening effects to the influence of the value patterns faced. The use of systematic techniques and the right approach is also expected to achieve the objectives of an accurate assessment.

The main data in this study are taken from Eka Kurniawan's novel *Beauty is a Wound*, and the source of data are from the phrases and sentences of the novel which then analyzed in accordance with the theories adopted in this research.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

The followings are the results of this research:

1. The dark period experienced by the protagonist makes her feel sad, but it is precisely with that sadness that makes her much stronger. This attitude is reflected in how she negotiates with the colonizers in defending her life. However, it does not stop until the end of the colonial period. She lives as a prostitute until the end of her life.
2. The main character's experiences are very dark. Her family is drowning in a bomb by Japanese soldiers, and she mourns for several days. The Japanese soldiers come and take all the women and children. They are jailed and several people die of starvation. The depiction of the protagonist is so clearly depressing in the novel.
3. The main character's experiences two dark experiences, physically or experiences as a slave. She should give service to the soldier for sexual purpose and she is also used by the soldier as tool for political activities and is discriminated due to social status.
4. The protagonist's experiences of dark times are when she becomes a single parent. Even though the protagonist's job is illegal, she does not want her daughter to be

the same as her. The protagonist raises her child just like any average mother, even better.

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 Violence

Violence in a narrow sense refers to actions in the forms of attack, destruction of one's (physical) self, or something that potentially belongs to physical actions that are personal in nature, meaning that it leads to a certain person or group that is carried out deliberately, directly, and actually.

Violence in a broad sense, refers to physical or psychological acts committed by a person or a group of a people either intentionally or unintentionally, directly or indirectly, personally or structurally. What is meant by structural violence is violence that occurs in the social structure, such as oppression by an authoritarian state, a system that makes social injustice.

“With annoyance the Japanese took out the samurai and held it up until the tip pressed against Dewi Ayu’s cheek and repeated the order. But Dewi Ayu did not move, still so even though the tip of the samurai then scratched the face” (Kurniawan, 2002: 64)

The quotation above shows that Dewi Ayu is injured by a Japanese samurai on her face.

Other form of violence is seen in the following:

“Everything I’ve done to try to kill him. I should have a swallowed a grenade and blew it on in the stomach. Poor little one, like criminals, poor people are also hard to die” (Kurniawan 2002: 23-4).

Violence is directed to a baby girl who has just been born. Violence against the baby girl is carried out personally by her own mother, Dewi Ayu. Her mother believes that the baby girl would be born beautiful like the three previous daughters, and she does not want that, even though she has not yet seen what the ugly baby looks like. With the belief that the baby will be born with a beautiful face, Dewi Ayu has done various ways to abort it, but in fact the baby is born and is never seen by her mother who later dies after 14 days after birth.

The physical violence is also received by Dewi Ayu as seen in the following:

“That morning the newcomers stood in the field, burnt in the sun waiting for the camp commander. Children are crying, people are almost fainting, because nobody is allowed to sit” (Kurniawan, 2002: 64).

It shows that the Japanese soldiers give torment to the prisoners including Dewi Ayu by asking them to stand for hours under the heat of the sun which might drain the stamina of the prisoners.

4.2.2 Prostitute Slave

Prostitution is one form of human trafficking. Human trafficking is a modern form of human slavery. Trafficking in persons is increasingly prevalent in various countries, including Indonesia and other developing countries. Usually, women and children are the group most victims of the criminal act of trafficking in persons. Victims

are trafficked not only for the purpose of prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, but also include other exploitation such as forced labor, slavery and so on. Slavery is a condition of a person under the ownership of another person, a practice similar to slavery is the act of placing someone in the power of another person so that the person is unable to refuse a work that is illegally ordered by that other person, even though that person does not want it. The meaning of slavery in the discourse of prostitution will be narrowed down to an act that violates international law regarding war protocol, namely the act resulting in loss or damage to women both physically and psychologically as experienced by Dewi Ayu. This is seen in the quotation: "this command will give me medicine if I sleep with him." (Kurniawan 2002: 67). It shows that Dewi Ayu's struggle is not directly reflected, there is no rebellion or escape from the colonialism. Dewi Ayu seems to surrender. Look at the expressions which actually show that she wants to fight to survive, which makes her the last surviving lineage in this country. Another quotation also implies that there is an action of prostitution slave: "hopefully our army can capture the Japanese, we will be exchanged like rice and sugar." (Kurniawan, 2002: 58). This expression describes Dewi Ayu's obstinacy towards violence perpetrated by Japanese colonizers. But it is not free. In reality they are only used as tools for political activity both natives and non-natives.

4.2.3. Single Parent

Being a prostitute slave, Dewi Ayu has four daughters whom she does not know who their fathers are. Alamanda, Adinda, and Maya Dewi have beautiful faces passed down from their mother. Meanwhile, her youngest daughter, whose name is Cantik, is born ugly. It is the result of her prayer since she is in the womb. Despite being a prostitute, Dewi Ayu remains a good mother for her children. A good mother for her children and lives in the colonial period; she gets many experiences of life for. Moreover, she should live separately from her family. She becomes a Japanese prisoner and a prostitute in Halimunda. Before being colonized by Japan and separated from her family, Dewi Ayu attends school. She is not only beautiful but also smart. She has a broader mindset and has different thoughts from others. She is often able to solve every problem despite of her young age.

The role of a mother is not only about how she manages and protects her child, but also how she educates religion to her child because it is not taught at school. Although she is a prostitute, she does not want her children to be the same as herself and does not want her children to be seen as the children of a prostitute. She plays the role of a mother who instills religious values by teaching about life, even though she does not. The second message shows that the beautiful goddess is the mother who is responsible for her child. Although she has to be a bully in order to support her children, she does not forget her job as a mother. To be a single parent without knowing the fathers of her children shows that Dewi Ayu is a strong woman. She is able to carry out her double roles as a woman who gives birth, raises, educates, and earns a living for her children and as a good mother. A woman should not only be able to give birth, but also be able to produce useful children. The care of children born is the responsibility of women; the delinquency of children is considered as a sign of the failure of women in caring for children.

"At night, the children are accompanied by Mirah, but during the day she takes care of the children like a mother in general. She sent the

children to the best schools, even sent them out to study the Al-qur'an under kyai Jabro" (Kurniawan 2002: 104).

The above descriptions imply that Dewi Ayu is a prostitute, but is also a mother, a sinner and a role model. Men admire her and dream of her. Her beauty, body, and personality make them obsessed. "they can not be prostitutes" she said to Mirah, "except for their desires." (Kurniawan 2002: 41). This quotation shows a mother's hopes for her children. Dewi Ayu's good attitude is that she does not want to let her children accept the same fate as her, being a prostitute.

5. Conclusion

This research is concluded by showing that Dewi Ayu as the main character in the novel keeps being a strong woman to be a good mother for her children although she should face various forms of social discrimination due to her duty as a prostitution slave. It supports other findings in other researches stating that "Ayu Dewi is a classy prostitute who is famous at Halimunda, Indonesia. She suffers in her life not only mentally but also physically. However she has strength to be tough and to solve her problems. She does not feel hopeless to encounter her tough life, but she keeps on struggling for her happiness and her right as a woman (Mulia, 2020).

References

- Argibay, C. M. (2003). *Sexual Slavery and the Comfort Women of World War II*. Berkeley Journal of International Law. Vo. 21 (2). https://genderandsecurity.org/sites/default/files/Argibay_Sexual_Slavery_the_Comfort_W_of_WWII.pdf
- Atikah, N. (2006). *Hukum Pidana Internasional dan Perempuan, Komnas Perempuan*. Jakarta: pustaka Azzam.
- Bambang, S. (2008). *Psikologi Perkembangan Anak dan Remaja*. Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Creswell, W. J. (2013). *Mixed Method Research*. Nebraska: University Press. Duval & Miller. 1985. *Marriage and Family Development 6th ed*. New York: Harper & Row Publisher.
- Dagun, I. (2002). *Psikologi Keluarga*. Jakarta: PT. Rineka Cipta.
- Denny, W. (2014). *Menjadi Indonesia Tanpa Diskriminasi*. Jakarta: PT. Bina Karya.
- Duvall, E. M. & Miller, B. C. (1985). *Marriage and Family Development* (Sixth Edition). New York: Harper & Row.
- Farhana. (2017). *Aspek Hukum Perdagangan Orang di Indonesia*. Jakarta: Sinar Grafika.
- Hurlock. (1980). *Psikologi Perkembangan Suatu Pendekatan Sepanjang Rentan Kehidupan*. Jakarta: PT. Erlangga.
- Karen. (2014). *Psychoanalytic Personality Theory*. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Kanisius.
- Kartini, K. (1992). *Psikokritik Menurut Charles Maeron*. Dalam Anggadewi Moesono. *Psikoanalisis dan Sastra*. Depok: Pusat Penelitian Kemasyarakatan dan Budaya LPUI.
- Mulia. T. R. & Pardi. (2020). *Woman's Strength in Eka Kurniawan's Novel Beauty is A Wound*. Journal of Language. Vol.2 (1). <file:///C:/Users/USER/Downloads/2491-6181-1-PB.pdf>
- Kurniawan, E. (2015). *Cantik Itu Luka*. Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama.

- Masmien. (2010). *Tokoh dalam pemahaman psikoanalisis*. Dalam Anggadewi Moesono. *Psikioanalisis dan Sastra*. Depok: Pusat Penelitian, Kemasyarakatan dan Budaya LPUI.
- Moleong, J. L. (2007). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosda Karya.
- Noor. (1991). *Orangtua Permasalahan dan Upaya Mengatasi*. Semarang: PT. Efftar Offset.
- Suryasoemitra. (2007). *Wanita Single Parent Yang Berhasil*. Jakarta: PT. Edsa Mahkota.
- Syamsu, Y. (2009). *Psikologi Perkembangan Anak dan Remaja*. Jakarta: PT. Remaja Rosakarya.
- Topo, S. & Achjani, E. (2003). *Kriminalogi*. Jakarta: PT. Raja Grafindo Persada.
- Ubed, A. (2002). *Politik Identitas Etnis, Pergaulan Tanpa Identitas*. Yogyakarta: PT. Indonesia Tera.
- Varia, P. (1997). *Langkah Pencegahan Penanggulangan Tindak Kekerasan Terhadap Wanita*. Jakarta: Universitas Negeri Jakarta.
- Wahyudi. (2011). *Teori Pengkajian Fiksi*. Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press.