

# INJUSTICE IN EKA KURNIawan'S NOVEL *BEAUTY IS A WOUND*

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## Abstract

This study entitled *Injustice in Eka Kurniawan's Novel Beauty is a Wound* focuses on the injustice experienced by some women, Dewi Ayu and her four daughters. The main purpose of this study is to determine the types of injustice experienced by some women. In analyzing the novel *Beauty is a Wound*, descriptive research method was used to identify, classify and analyze the data. The collected data are divided into two categories: primary data and secondary data. The primary data is the novel *Beauty is a Wound* (2002) itself. The secondary data are some books and literatures related to the analysis such as from books or journals of injustice issues, from the internet and other relevant information to the analysis. The data are collected through library research. The result of the study shows that there are three types of injustice found in the novel. They are discrimination, subordination and violence.

**Keywords:** Discrimination, injustice, subordination, violence.

## 1. Introduction

The world of literature does not only talk about beauty, but also the meaning of life, love, and affection. Literary work contains critical ideas aimed at the government and social realities that are deemed incompatible with the hopes and interests of the community (Manugeran, et al, 2020). Moreover, Novels as a reflection of society illustrate the reality of the community in terms of social, economic and cultural activities that are developed in the community because literature is inseparable from the real life of society (Pardi, et al, 2020). Novels and literary works were used to express criticism (Nasution, et al, 2023). *Beauty is a Wound* is the first novel written by an Indonesian writer, Eka Kurniawan. The novel was published in 2002 in collaboration with Yogyakarta Cultural Academy and Window Publisher (Salaila & Asnani, 2022). The protagonist is Dewi Ayu. She is the main character in the novel who is mixed descent between natives and Dutch. She experiences the injustice who were forced to become prostitutes during the colonial period. Then she became a prisoner of war during the Japanese colonial period along with other girls who are turned into prostitutes and forced to satisfy the desires of the Japanese soldiers. Then after not being a prisoner of war, Dewi Ayu remained a prostitute because of economic pressure. She has to support her children.

Levy and Sidel (2013) define that injustice is the denial or violation of economic, sociocultural, political, civil, or human rights of specific populations or

groups in the society based on the perception of their inferiority by those with more power or influence. Injustice is a condition when a group or individual is treated differently and marginalized in society (Zaki, 2020). Injustice in treatment also creates a social inequality in society which will have an impact on the continuous inheritance of such treatment. Injustice arises because of things that are not in accordance with reality. For example, the difference between the applicable law and the regulations that apply in society.

Injustice generally does not connote law enforcement. It is unfair to only place justice on one side and eliminate it on the other, nor is it fair to only place justice on a group of people while others do not. Injustice is the advantage to some to pursue the vices of others. Injustice is not only done intentionally and consciously but also often done without being fully realized because it runs structurally (Faturrochman, 2008). Injustice is more dominant than justice.

This study is concerned with injustice with three important points namely the discrimination, subordination, and violence. Discrimination is treatment differently because of membership in a particular ethnic group (Brigham, 1991). Subordination has the meaning of being placed under or in an inferior position before others, or being submissive against the control or authority of others (Bhasin, 2001). Violence is a deliberate act that results in physical injury or mental stress (Carpenito, 2009).

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Discrimination**

Brigham (1991) states that discrimination is a treatment differently because of membership in a particular ethnic group. According to Theodorson & Theodorson in Futhoni dkk (2009:3), discrimination is unequal treatment of individuals or groups based on something, usually categorical, or specific attributes, such as based on race, ethnicity, religion or membership of social classes. Wahyudi (2014: 6) states that the meaning of discrimination is unfair and unbalanced treatment that is carried out to distinguish individuals, or groups, or distinctive attributes, based on ethnicity, religion, or social class membership.

Based on some definitions above, discrimination means any distinction, exclusion or restriction which has the effect or purpose of reducing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms in human life.

### **2.2 Subordination**

Sugihastuti and Sastriyani in Nasri (2016: 229) state that subordination is the restriction of women only to certain activities and is placed in a lower social position and is often undervalued, that women who are irrational and emotional lead to the assumption that women cannot lead and end up placing women in an unimportant position. Fakhri (2008: 15) argues that subordination occurs in a variety of different forms from time to time and from one place to another place. The assumption that women are irrational or emotional so that women cannot appear to lead, resulting in the emergence of an attitude that placing women in an unimportant position. So, it can be said that subordination is an attitude or action a society that places women in a lower position than men.

Shofiyah (2019) states that men and women are different in society because of their activities. Women activates as domestic work related to household chores, such as

cooking, cleaning the house, and taking care of children are tasks for everyone. This women activity is considered as subordinate work. While men activate outside, earning for living. Karl in Widya & Asnani (2020) states that women have the primary responsibility for their family's health and food, water and fuel. They work for unpaid job and largely unrecognized as well. Their major responsibilities are for the household but they have no right in having decision making power within the family.

### 2.3 Violence

Violence is a deliberate act that results in physical injury or mental stress (Carpenito, 2009: 22-29). According to Black (in Rabbani, 2017), violence is unfair use of force and cannot be allowed. The term "violence against women" refers to many types of harmful behavior directed at women and girls because of their sex.

Gelles and Straus in Huraerah (2007) define violence as any act carried out with the intention of, or perceived intention of, causing physical pain or injury to another person. The term violence against women has been used to describe a wide range of acts, including murder, rape and sexual assault, physical assault, emotional abuse, battering, stalking, prostitution, genital mutilation, sexual harassment, and pornography (Crowell et.al, 1996).

## 3. Research Method

The research method used to study the novel Eka Kurniawan's novel *Beauty is a Wound* was a descriptive method (Sugiyono, 2018). The data sources of this research were some words of the novel. The writers identify, classify and analyze that some words in relating to injustice: discrimination, subordination, and violence.

## 4. Discussion

In discussion, the writers present injustice in the forms of discrimination, subordination, and violence.

### 4.1 Discrimination

Dewi Ayu is one of the main characters in this novel. She is also one of the female figures who receive acts of discrimination. The discrimination against Dewi Ayu began when she was a prisoner. At a moment, Dewi Ayu had to swallow a complicated reality. She should meet the Soldier Commander to serve the commander's lust in exchange for medicine and food.

I replaced the girl from earlier, Commander. You slept with me but gave her mother some medicine and doctor. And the Doctor!  
(Kurniawan, 2002: 69)

Alamanda is a woman who experienced physical discrimination, due to the violent actions of the Shodancho who attacks their organs and sexuality, which is done intentionally, causing great pain or suffering, whether physical, spiritual or sexual.

Alamanda still saw his face which was a streak of white at a distance so close to his eyes, he felt his genitals being torn apart by this barbarity. (Kurniawan, 2002: 212-213)

Shodancho raped Alamanda because he was very infatuated with Alamanda's beauty, even before she had time to rape her proposed to Alamanda in a kind way but

Alamanda refused it arrogantly. This is what makes the Shodancho commit the act of rape. Before being raped, he drugged Alamanda and took him to an old house, where he then carried out his bad intentions. Attacks in the form of forced sexual intercourse he did. As a woman, Alamanda was powerless to put up a fight.

#### 4.2 Subordination

Subordination means an assessment or assumption that a role performed by one sex is inferior to the other. Social values and culture in society has separated the roles of men and women. Women are considered responsible and have a role in domestic or reproductive affairs, while men are in public affairs production. It is as long as social respect for domestic and reproductive roles is different with the role of the public and reproduction, so long injustice remains will still occur.

It cannot be believed, that we are leaving our own Houses behind!" said the woman next to her. "I hope it won't be for long I hope that our army can beat back the Japanese, said Dewi Ayu. Otherwise we are going to be traded like 'sugar and rice'. (Kurniawan, 2002: 61

Subordination is an unimportant assumption that generally occurs in woman. Negative assumptions make women have no access which is as broad as men in certain societies. Subordination causes superordinate constructions and subordinate.

Women do not fully have power over themselves. Whoever and wherever a woman is, she still always has worry over what will happen to his body is included in own family environment. There is no guarantee of a safe space for woman. In addition, from the quotation above it appears that the beauty of women does not always provide comfort and security, even the ugly depiction of beauty ends as a Krisan lust, he gets no love actually from someone he considered a prince.

For years, Krisan had kept thinking about that idea, about having a hideous lover. What's wrong with ugly women? he asked himself. They can be fucked just like beautiful women can. (Kurniawan, 2002: 469)

Female characters who are raped in the novel is proof that women experience colonization of the body by men. Men still think that women are only objects that can be exploited, especially their bodies and sex. Women are creatures that subordinated because she has a weaker physique than men even to fight the colonization of her own body.

#### 4.3 Violence

Sexual violence is a type of violence that can occur both in public and domestic spaces. Legal subjects for violent offender sexual intercourse are usually suffered by women and children often considered weak victims. Sexual abuse, including: forced sexual intercourse that committed against people who live in the household, forced relationships sexual intercourse against one within the scope of his household with another person for commercial purposes and/or certain purposes. Sexual violence refers to any sexual activity, it from can be in the form of assault or without attack.

Two men just finished having sex with her, 2 men were satisfied and cleaned up the rest of the illicit goods with clothes the men were crazy, the others slept violently while the others could not wait for their

rations to be given very disgusting they even rubbed their genitals in front of the street without shame. (Kurniawan, 2002: 179)

Sexual violence occurred against Dewi Ayu and other women. Violence is not only done by a man but all Japanese soldiers. They take turns. They think that women are just playing to release their lust. Even though the women are crying or in pain, they continue to sleep with her in turns.

## 5. Conclusion

Injustice is a condition when a group or individual is treated differently and marginalized in society. Discrimination in the novel occurs in the type of physical sexual. Subordination in the novel is occurred when women have no right to access. Violence in the novel happens physically, psychologically, and sexually.

Discrimination contained in the novel *Beauty is a Wound* is discrimination from the colonial nation. The treatment of the Dutch was different from the Japanese soldiers. The Japanese Soldiers treat indigenous women with violence. The subordination can be seen from women who are raped in the novel. This proves that women's body is colonized by men. Men still think that women are just objects than can be exploited, especially their bodies and sex. Women are subordinated creatures because they are considered physically weaker than men; even, they are considered unable to fight against the colonization of their own bodies. The violence experienced by the female character in the Eka Kurniawan's novel can be seen that the violence occurs mostly in the reality of life.

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