

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Nobody is exactly the same in this world, everyone looks different, even if he is an identical twin. God creates people in different color, hair, eyes, language, nationality, sex, etc. However, those distinctions affect our social life. Many people keep a distance from others only because the others looked different, not like 'us'. People are sometimes subjected to different treatment because of their color, age, sex, language, or religion. Often they face problems as the result of their differences, such as difficulty in finding a job, social isolation, and, occasionally, violent attacks against them. Such situation creates discrimination among them. To discriminate socially is to make a distinction between people on the basis of class or category, without regard to individual merit (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia). Discrimination is action based on prejudice resulting in unfair treatment of people.

To discriminate against others, one should possess 'power' to show his/her identity as being superior. The bigger power one has, the bigger also his/her chance to control over those who are inferior. As the result, people with power are able to dictate or oppress those who have less power. Power that presents issue around superiority, is basically preventing people from feeling equal. Hence, when we see people that looks 'different' than we do,

either their religion or color, sometimes we treat them in a different way (in a negative sense).

It is the writer's curiosity about power that she designs study to analyze it deeper. It was all started when the writer first acknowledged about the issue of caste system which is strongly related to power. Caste system divides people to classes that it creates a Touchable and Untouchable castes, which in turn, it results in discrimination. Caste system is an important part of ancient Hindu tradition. Caste comes from the Spanish and Portuguese word "casta" which means "race", "breed", or "lineage" (Elliot, 1997). Members of higher caste (the Touchables) enjoy more wealth and opportunities while members of lower caste (the Untouchables) do menial jobs.

The God of Small Things, a novel by **Arundhati Roy**, an India's writer, raises the issue of caste system and therefore forces the writer to do the study on this issue. It portrays a life in the community of Syrian Christian family in Kerala, South Indian. The issue of power is strongly planted in the novel since it intertwines stories about jealousy, prejudice, child abused, and of course, caste system. At the same time, it also portrays the social customs, politics, and human behaviour in a land whose history was altered by its British colonizer. Though, the study only focuses on the exercise of power that relates to the issue of the Untouchables, the lowest caste members, as they suffer from the treatment of the upper caste members who operate their power upon them.

In this research, the writer will limit her discussion only to the relationship among characters of different castes, and how power is exercised among them. To analyze the novel, the writer would try to conduct a literary analysis based on postcolonial theory since it aims to examine power relations in various contexts. Furthermore, the theory is also built around the concept of otherness that creates binary oppositions: powerful/powerless, oppressor/oppressed, colonizer/colonized, etc. Relying on those notions, then the theory will be used to determine the position of the characters, whether he/she is powerful or powerless when power is operated. As Foucault says that power and resistance is a pair that always goes together, that resistance will appear as the result of power, the writer will also discover the forms of resistance arise in response to power. Last but not least, the writer will use the ideas of power proposed by Foucault to identify the relationship of power that are found in the novel.

1.1 Reason for Choosing the Topic

There are some reasons triggering the writer to conduct the research. One of the reasons is her curiosity to comprehend the issue of power and the outcomes resulted from it. Furthermore, the study is conducted to find out the various forms of resistance that may be aroused during the practice of power.

The novel illustrates the life of Syrian Christian family with the story of their conflicts, centered on the problem of 'love affair' across castes.

Thus it is expected by conducting the research, the writer would know how power is exercised and what have been resulted by it.

1.2 Research Questions

The writer designs the study to find out the establishment of power relation among characters. Hence, the research questions are formulated as follows

- What types of power are exercised in the novel based on Foucault's ideas on power?
- What forms of resistance by the Untouchables against power are presented in the novel?
- What outcomes have been resulted by power relations to the Untouchables?

1.3 Aims of the study

Considering the questions above, the writer intends to find out:

- The types of power that are exercised in the novel based on Foucault's ideas on power.
- The forms of resistance against power that are presented in the novel.
- The outcomes that have been resulted by power to the Untouchables.

1.4 Limitation of the Study

The study only centers on the situation of power relations based on caste system, therefore the characters involved in the relationship of power are the higher caste members – next in the analysis, addressed as the Touchables – with the lower caste members, who are called the Untouchables. The study will also identify the forms of resistance that occurred in response to the existence of power. And lastly, to find out the outcomes of power to the Untouchables. Furthermore, in the analysis later, power relations that are found in the novel will be evaluated by the theories of power proposed by Foucault.

1.5 Significance of the Research

This research hopefully would help our society to understand the cultural conflict that happens in India, as the society portrayed in *The God of Small Things*. The issue of the Untouchables of India today presents the world's cruelest form of apartheid. But, alas, this issue has received hardly any world attention as India's ruling class has kept it a closely guarded secret. The writer hopes that through literature, though there is no physical contribution to the problem, we would awaken our sympathy and empathy of humankind. Or even that we would criticize our own culture that might be surrounded by this sort of conflict.

1.6 Research Method

The method applied in conducting the research is qualitative approach in the form of a descriptive method. By using this method, the writer attempted to define and describe the data collected. To collect the data, the writer applied two techniques, namely library research and textual analysis. Library research is used to get information about the theory and the novel. While textual analysis is a technique to analyze the information gathered from the novel.

1.7 Organization of the Paper

CHAPTER I : this section contains introduction that discuss background, reasons for choosing the topic, research questions, aims of the study, limitation of the study, significant of the research, research methods, and clarification of the term.

CHAPTER II : included in this section are theoretical foundations that serve as a basis for the investigation of the research problem.

CHAPTER III: It contains methodology of the research that explains the research questions, research method, subject of the research, stages of the research, and description of characters.

CHAPTER IV: It will recount and discuss the data acquire from the research. Furthermore, the finding will be analyzed systematically.

CHAPTER V : It contains interpretation of the research finding in a form of conclusion and suggestion.