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The Social Classes and Reflection of 18th Century Life in Novel Pamela

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Abstract

In social life there are always rules, norms and values that organize the behavior or patterns of society. Yet some members of society cannot fulfill the rights and responsibilities in accordance with the norms and rules. Unequal rights and obligations in social life is the reason why there are social classes in society. It means that the people who have wealth and someone who can carry out many rights and obligations will be in the upper classes and those one with little or even no rights and responsibilities will be grouped in the lower classes. This research therefore aims to explain the phenomenon of social classes in the novel Pamela, and social condition in 18th century life in England that reflected in the novel. This research used descriptive qualitative method. It was conducted by describing the data within literary work which were related to the topic of the research. The analysis of the data was done using sociology of literature approach put forward by Swingewood and Laurenson. The results of this research show that during England 18th century, social discrimination has become a major problem in the community. Social status become the standard of interaction in the society. Success and prestige of a person are measured based on his/her birth. Nobody wants to be at the bottom of the social hierarchy. The character of Pamela never think that money and power is everything. She never despise her identity as a lower class citizen who is always treated unequally in the society.

Keywords: Social Classes, Pamela, 18th Century Life in England

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1. Introduction

We are born and our fate is decided by various factors, with none of these factors in our control. Our parents and family shape us in the way they want, the society shapes us in the way it wants; we cannot decide what they will do with us, it is up to fate to decide who we will grow up and how. According to Lenin (1917 : 56) in his book Alliance Between The Workers and Exploited Peasants, Classes can be considered as large groups of people differing from each other by looking at the place they occupy in an identifiable system of social production, by their association (usually fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organisation of labour, and, consequently, by the dimensions and mode of acquiring the share of social wealth of which they dispose.

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In social life there are always rules, norms and values that organize the behavior or patterns of society. Yet some members of society cannot fulfill the rights and responsibilities in accordance with the norms and rules. Unequal rights and obligations in social life is the reason why there are social classes in society. according to Wellek (1986:94) in his book said that "social class are individuals and groups of individuals are conceived of as constituting higher and lower differentiated strata, in term of some specific or generalized characteristic or set characteristic".

Social Classes has become one of major social phenomena that happened in the 18th century of England, people class in this community is determined by the birth and possessions. According to Teeuw (1986:158) "*status sosial seseorang dapat dilihat dalam kehidupan sehari-hari, misalnya gaya hidup seperti cara berpakaian, tingkat dan jenis pendidikannya, kehormatan dan hak-hak istimewa yang tampak pada pola interkasinya*". For a woman in England 18th century , the social rank will be determined by her husband. When married, a woman will inherit her husband's social caste; Before marriage, the father's social status determines his daughter's class. Because a woman's social status is decided by her husband, a woman aged 18 in the 18th Century has no qualms about marrying a man from a higher class. The only consequence for the woman is the increased of social status. A married woman from the upper class has four responsibilities in life. She had to obey her husband and give birth to her children. Wives were conventionally in charge of the household tasks, duties that would include supervising the servants and providing hospitality as well as delicious food and organize the kitchen staff. The fourth responsibility is to act like a woman. This includes getting dressed appropriately, being able to have conversations, singing and playing instruments.

Levin (1986:99) divided social status into three different kinds; the first social status is granted status. this status given to a person from birth and given directly without being conscious, it is an absolute status. The second social status is the obtained status ,this is a term given to people who get social status based on achievement. The last one is assigned status; this status is obtained through an award or gift from another party, for services struggle or need something for the benefit of society.

Since social classes has become one of social phenomena that happened in the society, it is very interesting to analyze a literary work which deals about this issue. In this research, the researcher chooses to analyze the novel Pamela, written by Samuel Richardson because this novel shows the portrait of England society on 18th centuries which largely governed by the class system. As an interesting topic to be studied, this research is not the first study that takes the Pamela as the main object of research. There are some previous writings which took novel Pamela as the main theme of their research.

The first research is conducted by Kristine Syvertsen Berg from University of Oslo in 2011. In his research entitled Love and Social Differences. She analyze the novel Pamela using comparison theory. In his analysis she discovered that Pamela have a lot of similarity with Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre.

The second research is conducted by Morgan (2016) from Illinois State University. His research named The Function Of Virginity Within The Early English Novel ". In this research, Morgan identifies the power of virginity that found throughout Samuel Richardson's novel Pamela and the ways in which these forms interact with concepts such as gender and classes.

The third researcher who took the short story as the main theme is Tenrisanna (2018) entitled "Defense Mechanisms in E. A. Poe's Selected Short Stories". Her study mainly tell about the type of defense mechanism in Poe's selected stories. Through narrative and formal analysis, she explore the main character in short stories as characters that represent the whole concept of story.

2. Method

The research method that used in this research was descriptive qualitative. It is implemented by describing the data within the literary work which is related to the topic of the research. The researcher explores the novel *Pamela* to get the descriptive data about the portrait of social classes reflected in the novel.

2.1. Source of Data

Researcher divide source of the data into primary and secondary data. The primary data was the novel *Pamela* which consists of 652 pages. The data were in form of quotations which were selected from the novel. The secondary data were some information which are taken from various books, journals and website on internet. It is used in order to support the analysis. Through this secondary data, the writer collected and used the data which are relevant to the topic.

2.2. Data Collection

The most important step in completing the analysis of *Burmese Days* is collecting the data. In this research, the researcher used library research method. It is used in order to get information related to the analysis. The data are gained from the original text of the novel and numerous literary books including thesis reference, articles and also the data from internet.

2.3. Data Analysis

The method used in this study was descriptive method of analysis. This method was conducted by describing the social facts that exist in the literature which is reflected in the novel *Pamela* by Samuel Richardson. The researcher read the data comprehensively and made the list of data by classifying them based on their relevance and significance. All data were studied and analyzed by comprehend readings to get deep understanding.

3. Findings

In social life there are always rules, norms and values that organize the behavior or patterns of society. Yet some members of society cannot fulfill the rights and responsibilities in accordance with the norms and rules. Unequal rights and obligations in social life is the reason why there are social classes in society. According to Karim (1984:94) in his book that "social class are individuals and groups of individuals are conceived of as constituting higher and lower differentiated strata, in term of some specific or generalized characteristic or set characteristic"

It means that the people who have wealth and someone who can carry out many rights and obligations will be in the upper classes and those one with little or even no rights and obligations will be grouped in the lower classes. Furthermore Karim divided the group of social classes into several layers and criteria. The first one is wealth; it means that the people that have a lot of money, lands, and houses will be grouped in upper layers.

The second criteria is authority power, this criteria maybe the strongest from the other criteria because some with authority can easily control someone with the wealth power. So even in the upper classes someone with the power of authority will be put in the top of chart. And the last one is social status; someone with knowledge will be honored by the other people, as example someone with better knowledge will be honored by the other people.

In this novel, social class become the major problem within relationship between the characters. The relationship between upper class and middle class the most obvious place in this novel portrait between Mr. B and Mr. William. They are both rivals for Pamela's love. But because there is a large difference in status Mr. B makes this as love game as one-side rivalry. Mr. William worked as a personal preacher for Mr B. One time he was given the money of 350 pounds by Mr. B. He considered the money as a reward after working for 3 years for Mr. B, but it turns out it's all just Mr. B scheme to imprison him. Mr. B also demanded the money to be returned. He even threatened to imprison Mr. William if he doesn't return the money. The power of squire B. is enormous, this happen not only because he is a landlord but he also served as justice of peace, a position which gave him an authority to regulate a certain areas, including acting as judge in ordinary cases. Therefore he can arbitrarily imprison someone who who below his class, including Mr. William who sit on middle class.

The relationship between characters in upper-class and lower classes is probably the most common relationship in this novel, a huge social inequality makes the treatment to lower class people is extremely not fair. Lower-class people not only as an insulting object for upper class people, but even worse as the object of sexual satisfiers for those upper class people. This case clearly describes in relationship between Pamela and Mr. B. The relationship between Mr. B and Pamela is masters and servants. This condition is no different than the relationship between landowners and workers, this relationship is dominated by the landlords because they will gain many benefits from the results done by the workers. Otherwise the workers forced to work hard and get an appropriate treatment. it was disclosed by Pamela on the quotes below:

“and yet I work very hard with my hassle, upon his linen,
and the fine linen of my family, beside about
flowering him a waistcoat. But my heart's almost
broken, for who am I likely to have for my rewards, but
shame and disgrace, or ill words and hard treatment (Richardson:1740)”

There is a major problem that often happened to women in 18th century of England especially women from lower class. Female workers in 18th century were often get sexual assaulted by landlords. The absolute power of landlords as if allow him to do anything as they wish.

The relationship between lower-class that happened in this novel clearly portrait on Pamela and her parents Mr. Andrews and Mrs. Andrews. Their relationship are the basic examples of England lower class society in 18th century. The people of that era still dependent on agriculture. They live in small villages and down towns. Most of them produce food for themselves, for landlords and some are sold in the market. Most of the

agricultural culture emphasizes the attitude of resignation to poverty and give priority to harmonize life with nature. That statement clearly illustrate in this quote below:

“Spare Madam, I beseech you, my parents. They are honest, they are good. It is no crime to be poor, they were once in a very creditable way” (Richardson, 1740:360)

4. Discussion

The story of Pamela is closely related to the phenomena which happened in England in the 18th century. It does not refer directly to reality but it would be a mirror of reality. It depicts the social phenomena in England. Throughout the story, Richardson shows how the lower class survive in the situation of such tyranny. The setting in the novel depicts the social condition of England in the 18th century. Richardson connects his novel with its social, political and ideological context. It is undeniable that the author can be inspired by social reality of life. The literary work may present some facts in reality but it is also creation of the author’s imaginations and ideas. During England 18th century, success and prestige of a person are measured based on his social status. Nobody wants to be at the bottom of the social hierarchy. In the character of Mr.B, it can be seen that he tries to change pamela affection with his social status. Basically, he has a desire to to spoil pamela with his wealth. Although he already become a successful squire, he thinks that money and power is not enough for his successful. He needs Pamela to prove his social status in the society. In the conversation with his mother, he clearly describes his feeling. Many people say that a rich person cannot be corrupted since they already have much money. In fact, greed and social injustice are the main cause of corruption in the story.

There are many factors that influence the author in writing the literary work. Social status, ideology, cultural and social background will affect the way the author writes the literary work. Pamela is a story which inspired by Samuel Richardson’s life as an middle class citizen in 18th century. Richardson shows his disappointment about the system of dictatorship. He thinks that colonialism is an evil system. Through the characters in the story, Richardson attempts to explain how the social classes take an important role in society. He uses Pamela as a medium of expression to expose injustice and Social discrimination. He has a mission to convey the political perspectives through characters and plot of the novel and he decides to use this novel as a weapon to destroy the evil system in England.

Aristocrats and noble people were born into the upper class, remained, and married as such. Likewise, poor people were born into the lower class, remained, and married lower class people. Richardson clearly exposed such distinct divisions of class throughout the novel (though not always adhered to) and the irony of it is seen here in this early passage. He is to remain in reference to as “gentleman” because of his social status, no matter his behavior. The degradation is in the fact that he would show any interest in someone viewed as his inferior.

There are many factors that influence the author in writing the literary work. Social status, ideology, cultural and social background will affect the way of the author to write the literary work. Pamela is a story which inspired by Richardson’s experience when he live in England. Richardson shows his disappointment about the system of colonialism. He thinks that colonialism is evil system. Through the characters in the story, Richardson attempts to explain how the social class takes an important role in society. He uses Pamela as a medium of expression to expose injustice and social discrimination.

5. Conclusion

Issues of class were strongly addressed in 18th century England. Traditional beliefs held that people who were born of a higher class deserved better treatment and opportunities than people who were born of a lower class. During this Age of Reason, many began to question these long-standing beliefs and consider people as people and not only the class in which they are born. Through the characters in the story, Richardson attempts to explain how the social class takes an important role in society. He uses Pamela as a medium of expression to expose injustice and social discrimination.

The result of this research shows that social discrimination has become a major problem in 18th century of England. Social status become the standard of interaction in the society. Success and prestige of a person are measured based on his/her birth. Nobody wants to be at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Since Mr. B has absolute power as a Bourgeoisie, he knows he can break the rules and misuse his authority for his personal gain. He takes bribes to earn more money. He uses his position to attempt to rape Pamela. He tries to convince Mr. William that bribery is normal and it is difficult to do anything without offering bribes. The character of Pamela never think that money and power is everything. She never despise her identity as a lower class citizen who is always treated unequally in the society. She doesn't desperately need prestige to change her social status in the society like every other lower class citizen.

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