



## **DISCRIMINATION TOWARD ASIAN IMMIGRANT IN UNITED STATES IN THE NOVEL *QUICHOTTE* (2019) BY SALMAN RUSHDIE**

**Irma Permata<sup>1</sup>, An Fauzia Rozani Syafei<sup>2</sup>**

English Department

Faculty of Languages and Arts

Universitas Negeri Padang

email: [irmapermata98@gmail.com](mailto:irmapermata98@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

This thesis is an analysis of the novel *Quichotte* (2019) by Salman Rushdie. The purpose of this analysis is to find out how the novel shows the issue of discrimination toward Asian Immigrant which is done by the American. This analysis also intended to show how the contribution of fictional elements (character, setting and action/plot) in revealing the issue of discrimination. This analysis is done through a text-based and context-based interpretation which related to the concept of orientalism by Edward R. Said. The result of this analysis shows the Asian Immigrant getting discriminate by the American. The discrimination can be seen through physical violence and verbal violence.

**Key words:** *discrimination, orientalism, immigrant*

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

People migrate to other country for some reasons. They may leave their homeland when the conditions are no longer satisfactory. They may migrate in order to fulfil their needs. Many scholars have argued that the decision to migrate involves at several levels of explanation such as individual, familial and structural-institutional. (Digital History, 2021) The first one is individual which focuses on individual perception and asks what advantages they may achieve by migrating. The second is familial level which focuses on family needs. People migrate in order to enhance their family prosperity or improve its well-being. The last level is structural-institutional that focuses on social, political, and economic contexts that encourage or discourage population movement.

United States, for example, is one of the countries in the world which receives immigrant from all parts of the world. Most of the immigrants are from South Asia such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. According

<sup>1</sup> English ELLSP of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang graduated on March 2023

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang



to the US census in 2010 (in Zaynah Rahma & Susan J. Paik 2017), South Asian population was estimated to be about 3.86 million, reflecting over 20% of the Asian American population (US Census 2010). India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have sent the largest numbers of immigrants to the United States. From those three countries, Indians become the highest US population of South Asians.

However, as immigrant they do not live their life easily. They have to adjust with American society which is differently from their cultural practices. They have to adapt with the new place, new social and new culture. Yet, they keep maintaining their culture and it is called as ‘salad bowl’. Metaphorically, as immigrants they can be selective with the ingredients they add to their salad, leaving some out, and increasing the amounts of others based on their needs. According to Berray, Mohamed (2019), the salad bowl retains the individuality and independence of ethnic groups and permits their existence side-by-side dominant cultures.

Meanwhile, when they are in the process to adapt with those things, some immigrants are being the victim of discrimination. Discrimination is the unfair or prejudicial treatment of people and groups based on characteristics such as race, gender, age, or sexual orientation (American Psychological Association, 2021). There are several types of discrimination, which are age discrimination, disability discrimination, sexual orientation, status as a parent, religious discrimination, national origin, pregnancy, sexual harassment, race, color and sex, and reprisal or retaliation (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021)

Living in a country with different environment from their homeland raise one of fundamental issues in the discussion of race. As Indian immigrant who migrates to America they cannot live their life comfortably. Some of them are getting racist violence because of their physical appearance, religion and nationality. It relates to Indian immigrant report in Dallas Morning News which entitled *Racist hate mail threatens violence against immigrants* (September 1, 2020):

“The letter reads, “We will have no choice but to shoot mercilessly” immigrants of Chinese and Indian descent at their workplaces, playgrounds, pools or elsewhere in their communities, according to Irving police.”

It shows Americans doing discrimination to people from India at their jobs. They also said that threatens shootings if people from India do not return to their home countries. As immigrant, they are getting unfair treatment in their workplace and get some threaten if they do not go back to their origin country. (September 1, 2020)

This study examines the issue of discrimination focuses on discrimination toward Indian Immigrant. This issue also portrayed in a novel *Quichotte* (2019)

by Salman Rushdie. The novel reflects how the character revealing how immigrant getting discrimination by physical violence and verbal violence.

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

The analysis of the novel *Quichotte* (2019) by Salman Rushdie will be done through fictional devices such as character, setting, and action/plot as important aspects of analyzing. The character has an important role in revealing the issue of discrimination. It is used to reveal the discrimination which is done by the American toward Asian immigrant. Setting is used to reveal time and place when and where the story takes place. Plot/action is used to identify the conflict that the character faced. Moreover, this analysis uses the theory of orientalism by Edward R. Said. It gives contribution in revealing the issue of discrimination toward Asian immigrant which can be seen through physical violence and verbal violence.

## **C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This article analyses the issue of discrimination toward Asian immigrant in novel *Quichotte* (2019) by Salman Rushdie. Discrimination toward Asian immigrant in this analysis refers to the American's unfair treatment toward Indian immigrant. The protagonists, Sam DuChamp and Ismail Smile (or his pen name Quichotte; which is often mentioned in this analysis) are the representation of Asian immigrant, specifically Indian, living in America. Being immigrant, they often get some discrimination due to their physical look and race which are different from most people in America. Discrimination toward Asian immigrant in this analysis can be seen through physical violence and verbal violence.

### **1. Physical Violence**

Physical violence is one of discrimination which is done by the American toward Indian immigrant in order to chase Indian away from their country. It is happened due to their unwillingness of Indian's existence in their homeland. American done some threat that lead to physical violence. This condition can be seen from the following quotation:

“In 1987 the Dotbuster gang terrorized Indian-American families in Jersey City. A letter from the gang published in *The Jersey Journal* threatened violence. “We will go to any extreme to get Indians to move out of Jersey City. If I'm walking down the street and I see a Hindu and the setting is right, I will hit him or her. We plan some of our most extreme attacks such as breaking windows, breaking car windows, and crashing family parties.” The threats were carried out. One Indian man was attacked and died four days later. Another was put into a coma. There were further nighttime attacks, and burglaries too.” (p.23)

From the quotation above, it can be seen that American want Indian immigrant move out of their country. They do some threaten to threat Indian so they will go out of the country. As the Indian are not leaving the country, American do physical violence by attacking and killing Indian immigrants. In utterance “*We will go to any extreme to get Indians to move out of Jersey City. If I’m walking down the street and I see a Hindu and the setting is right, I will hit him or her.*” shows that discrimination happen not only because Indian race but also due to their religion.

Another proof that supported this condition can be seen from the following quotation:

“Then came September 11, 2001, and young Indian men started wearing T-shirts reading DON’T BLAME ME, I’M HINDU, and Sikh men were attacked because their turbans made them look Islamic, and cab drivers put flag decals on their windshields and stickers on the glass partitions between themselves and their passengers reading GOD BLESS AMERICA...” (p.23)

It can be seen from the quotation above that being Indian immigrants and Sikh men who often wear their daily clothes by wearing turban also get discrimination that can cause death in Western country. According to the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life survey of Asian Americans in 2012, from more than 3.500 Asian Americans are interviewed and there is only 1% of Asian American identify themselves as Sikhs. Since they are minority in America, natives see them as “otherness”.

Another quotation that shows American do some discrimination can be seen from the following quotation:

“Black citizens were regularly killed by white policemen in one of these other countries, or arrested in hotel lobbies for the crime of making a phone call to their mothers, and children were murdered in schools because of a constitutional amendment that made it easy to murder children in schools; and in the other country, a man was lynched by sacred-cow fanatics for the crime of having what they thought was beef in his kitchen, and an eight-year-old girl from a Muslim family was raped and killed in a Hindu temple to teach the Muslim population a lesson.” (p.51)

From the quotation above it can be seen how white people discriminate immigrant with unreasonable reasons. Black citizens killed by white policemen and arrested due to making a phone call to their mothers, children were murdered in school due to constitutional amendment, man was lynched, and a girl from Muslim family was raped and killed to teach the Muslim population a lesson are not make sense. The victim did not make mistake which violate the rules. It is not

unfair for the immigrants being killed without any mistake. This condition also violates human rights.

In addition, American doing physical violence toward Indian immigrant is a form of their fear of Indian's existence in their country that may influence in some aspects. They also feel threatened by the presence of Indian immigrant. This condition is supported by the following quotation:

"It doesn't matter a toss if she's a person of color or not," he declared. "Ridiculous phrase, anyway. Isn't everyone a person of color? What am I? Colorless?"

"Who could ever say such a thing about you, Hugo?" Baroness Alagoa did not go easy on the sarcasm. "However, the fact is that people of color presently, and with much reason, feel threatened by your party and its followers."

Explicitly, from the text above shows that American discriminate immigrant due to their skin-color. However, as non-white people, Indian immigrants are not feeling anxious. The utterance "*Isn't everyone a person of color? What am I? Colorless?*" shows that being white or non-white person is the same. The reason why white people discriminate non-white people is because they feel threatened of Indian's existence. It is supported from the utterance "*However, the fact is that people of color presently, and with much reason, feel threatened by your party and its followers*".

In summary, the American doing discrimination towards immigrant physically because they feel that there is binary opposition between them and the immigrants. It relates with the concept orientalism by Edward R. Said which mention West countries construct 'occident/orient' means 'east/west'. American as the West feels like they have power over the immigrants. They do some discrimination that lead to physical violence.

## 2. Verbal Violence

Beside physical violence, American also discriminate Indian immigrant in form of verbal violence. Verbal violence is done by slurring the characters' race and disparaging racial comments. They also discriminate the character's skin-tone. This can be depicted from the following quotation:

"Brown people of South Asian ethnicity had a confusing history in America. In the early part of the twentieth century Quichotte and Dr. R. K. Smile's alleged common ancestor (not fictional), supposedly the first of their clan to live and work in the USA, had been denied American citizenship on the basis of the nation's first immigration act, that of 1790, which decreed that only "a free white person" was eligible for citizenship. And when the Immigration Act of 1917 was signed into law, South

Asians, known as *hindoos*, were officially barred altogether from immigrating to the United States. In *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind* (1923) the Supreme Court argued that the racial difference between Indians and whites was so great that the “great body of our people” would reject assimilation with Indians.” (p.22-23)

From the quotation above, it clearly shows that American doing discrimination toward Indian immigrant by refusing Indian’s citizenship as an American. People have their own right to gain their citizenship. However, as Indian immigrant, the characters are rejected due to their race and skin-tone. From the utterance “*In the early part of the twentieth century Quichotte and Dr. R. K. Smile’s alleged common ancestor (not fictional), supposedly the first of their clan to live and work in the USA, had been denied American citizenship on the basis of the nation’s first immigration act, that of 1790, which decreed that only “a free white person” was eligible for citizenship*” clearly shows the exclusion which is done by the American. According to the basis of the nation’s first immigration act, they declared that only white person was eligible for citizenship. It is written on their law. Yet, it is unfair for the characters because their skin-tone is mostly brown. It vividly show Indian immigrant cannot gain their citizenship as American due to their skin-tone. American also rejects the assimilation with Indians by the same reasons.

Their people also underestimate on how Indian immigrant dressed up and looks like. They also insult the character’s skin-tone which is brown. Some Indian people are wearing turban on their head but not all of Indian is wearing it. There are only Sikh people who wear turban and it has meaning behind it. In addition, most Indian people are having beard on their face. This condition can be depicted from the following quotation:

“What is that?” the white lady said, jerking a thumb in the direction of the map. “You hatching some kind of scheme?”  
“We are travelers like yourself,” Quichotte replied mildly, “so it is not unreasonable that we should map out our route.”  
“Where are your turbans and beards?” the white lady asked, her arm extended toward him, an angry finger pointing right at him.  
“You people wear beards and turbans, right? You shave your faces and take the headgear off to fool us? T u r b a n s,” she repeated slowly, making a swirling turban gesture around her head. (p.120-121)

From the quotation above, it can be depicted that American generalized that all of Indian are wearing turban and having beard. In fact, there are only privileged person who can wear turban, for instance, Sikh men. Turban itself is not only a headgear but also has symbol. It symbolizes holiness, spiritual strength, humility and respect for God (World Sikh Organization, 2020). From the utterance “*you people wear beards and turbans, right? You shave your faces and take the headgear off to fool us? T u r b a n s,*” she repeated slowly, making a swirling

*turban gesture around her head.*” Shows how American asserting on how they generalized Indian people are often wearing turban on their head and beards on their face. They disparage on how the character’s physically looks like. However, every people has their own characteristic and it is their identity as Indian immigrant to dress up like that.

Another proof that show American discriminate the characters’ verbally due to the characters’ skin-tone can be seen from the following quotation:

“His father can’t handle the sadness—can’t handle his son’s sadness or his own—and sends him to a boarding school in England. I see him. He’s a boy from the tropics trapped in the cold Midlands. He’s looking at racist words scrawled on the wall of his little study room, *wogs go home*. He’s looking at the perpetrator who’s standing there with the crayon in his hand, caught in the act.” (p.83-84)

From the utterance “*wogs go home*” clearly shows how west people do verbal violence. According to Merriam-Webster, wog is used as an insulting and contemptuous term for a dark-skinned foreigner. The using of “*wog*” is such an extremely offensive word which can offend many non-white people in this world. In this analysis, through implied author, it can be examine how the native insulting the character’s race due to his skin-tone.

Another proof that shows American doing verbal violence can be seen from the following quotation:

“A small crowd had gathered and it was getting bigger as the woman’s voice got louder. Two camp security guards came up. Uniforms, holstered guns, a judge-and-jury way with them. “You two are disturbing the peace,” one said. He wasn’t looking at the white lady. “You need to pack up and get gone,” the second guard said. “What’s your religion?” the white lady asked. “It is my good fortune,” Quichotte replied, no longer so courteously, “that having passed through the first valley, my son and I are both blessedly freed from doctrines of all sorts.” “Say what?” said the white lady.

“I have cast aside all dogma, both of belief and unbelief,” Quichotte said. “I am embarked on a high spiritual quest for purification to be worthy of my Beloved.”

A man’s voice from the crowd: “He’s saying he’s godless scum.”

“He’s planning something for sure,” the white lady said. “He’s got a map. He could be ISIS.”

“He can’t be ISIS and godless scum at the same time,” the first security guard pointed out, displaying an admirable capacity for logical thinking, and trying to maintain order. “Let’s not get carried away, ladies and gents.”

From the quotation above, it shows the indication of verbal violence toward Indian immigrant. The utterance “*What’s your religion?*” clearly shows verbal violence since religion is the most sensitive thing for everyone. It can offend someone because a person’s religion is personal matter and it is their human right to embrace a certain religion. In addition, the utterance “*He’s saying he’s godless scum*” also shows the indication of verbal violence. It shows how American demeaning someone’s ethnic. Due to the protagonist come from Indian origin, Eastern country, American as Western country sees Indian as “other”.

Moreover, the indication of verbal violence can be seen from the utterance “*He’s planning something for sure,*” the white lady said. “*He’s got a map. He could be ISIS.*” Explicitly, it shows how American can insult Indian immigrant which can lead to bad opinion. They categorized Indian as ISIS which does not coherent by the character of the protagonist. As the Indian immigrant having physical characteristics and traits that similar to people who adhere ISIS, it does not mean that they are ISIS. It strengthened verbal violence toward the protagonists.

In summary, from several quotation that prove the discrimination which is done by the American toward the characters verbally, relates to the Orientalism theory by Edward R. Said that the representations of ‘the Orient’ and ‘the Oriental’ which is constructed by the West and they produce ‘the Orient’ as a place of ‘otherness’. In this analysis, the Orient is represented as Asian country and the Oriental is represented as Western country. As the Oriental, Western country sees the Orient or Asian country as “other” and that is why they discriminate the characters’ as Indian immigrant.

#### **D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

The issue of discrimination toward Indian immigrant is revealed in the novel *Quichotte* (2019) written by Salman Rushdie. Plots and setting contribute in exploring the meaning of the novel. Text-based is a principal strategy in revealing the issue of discrimination toward Indian immigrant. This analysis deals with the concept of Orientalism by Edward Said. The discrimination toward Indian immigrant in this analysis refers to the unfair treatment done by the American which demeaning and insulting a certain ethnic. The protagonists, Sam DuChamp and Quichotte are the representation of Indian immigrant living in America who becomes the victim of discrimination due to their physical appearance and race.

Discrimination toward Asian immigrant can be seen through two forms, which are physical violence and verbal violence. Physical violence is done by the American in order to chase Indian away from their country. In addition, they do verbal violence to insult and demean a certain ethnic. They reject Indian’s



citizenship due to their skin-tone. As in their regulation, they only accept “free white person” who can gain American citizenship. They also offend someone’s religion though it is a sensitive thing for all people. As humans, people have their own rights to embrace certain religion. It is important not to segregate other people due to their race, skin-tone and physical looks since there is equality between white or non-white people.

However, the American as West considered they are superior rather than the Indian as East. They see Indian as “otherness” and discriminate their people due to their physical look and race. American is the representation as West who discriminate East people.

The issue of discrimination occurs when there is different race, culture and ethnic between groups in society. It is happen when one group with a larger population feels superior, powerful and underestimates another group with smaller population, or called minorities. However, when discrimination happens continuously, it can cause conflict and lead to the discordance. To minimalize the effect of discrimination, people have to respect cultural and racial differences. By respecting others, the social life between different groups will be peaceful.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abrams, M. H. 1999. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. USA: Earl McPeck
- Blank, et al. 2004. *Measuring Racial Discrimination*. Washington DC: The National Academies Press
- Britannica. 2021. *Salman Rushdie’s Biography*. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Salman-Rushdie>
- British Council Literature. 2021. *Salman Rushdie’s Biography*. Retrieved from <https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/salman-rushdie>
- CDC. 2021. *Types of Discrimination*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/eo/faqs/discrimination.htm>
- Dallas Morning News. (2020, September 1). *Racist Hate Mail Threatens Violence against Immigrants, Irving Police Say*. Retrieved from <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/crime/2020/09/01/racist-hate-mail-threatens-violence-against-immigrants-irving-police-say/>
- Digital History. 2021. *Why Do People Migrate?*. Retrieved from [https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp\\_textbook.cfm?smtID=2&psid=330](https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=2&psid=330)

