

THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN SELECTED NOVELS BY HAMKA

(Konsep Keadilan Sosial dalam Novel Terpilih Karya Hamka)

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This article has undergone a double-blind peer-review process (*Makalah ini telah melalui pentilaian sulit berganda*)

Abstract

Hamka, an Indonesian philosopher and writer, frequently highlighted the injustices caused by the Minangkabau people's rigid adherence to *Adat Papatih*, a set of matrilineal laws and customs, particularly in the division of inheritance. Yet most critical writings on his novels focus on their pedagogical value, mentioning little about the Islamic theological perspective embedded in his fictional representation of social injustice. This paper uses critical and qualitative content analysis of the concept of social justice or, more specifically, its lack thereof, as represented in his novels, through the Islamic philosophical framework of Syed Naquib al-Attas, who is well known for his in-depth perspective of Islamic theological concepts, including justice. Al-Attas posited that the Islamic concept of justice (*adl*) is the ability to put things in their proper place. According to him, this sense of justice is ingrained in every individual before they are born into this world, forming an essential part of their natural disposition (*fitrah*). Accordingly, the findings of this paper suggest that acts of injustice caused by the Minangkabau society's emphasis on materialism and the belittling of love in young lovers who wish to marry, as shown in Hamka's novels, violate this sense of justice. In conclusion, rigid adherence to Minangkabau laws

and customs in Hamka's novels can be viewed as detrimental to society and violates mankind's natural disposition (*fitrah*).

Keywords: Hamka, novel, social justice, marriage, *Adat Papatih*, *fitrah*

Abstrak

Dalam penulisan novelnya, Hamka, ahli falsafah dan penulis dari Indonesia sering menentang tentang ketidakadilan yang dilakukan oleh orang Minangkabau yang berpegang teguh pada Adat Papatih, sebuah undang-undang matrilineal dan adat resam yang memihak pada garis keluarga wanita, khususnya dalam pembahagian harta pusaka. Namun begitu, kebanyakan penulisan kritis lebih tertumpu pada nilai pedagogi yang terdapat dalam novel beliau, menyebut hanya sepintas lalu mengenai perspektif teologi Islam yang digambarkan menerusi konsep ketidakadilan sosial dalam penulisannya. Makalah ini menggunakan analisis kandungan kualitatif dan kritikal tentang konsep keadilan sosial, atau lebih spesifik tentang kekurangannya, seperti yang tertulis dalam novel-novel beliau, dengan mengambil pendekatan falsafah Islam seperti yang dikemukakan oleh Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas yang terkenal dengan perspektif yang mendalam tentang konsep-konsep dalam teologi Islam. Al-Attas berpendapat bahawa konsep "adl" atau keadilan dalam Islam ialah kebolehan dalam meletakkan sesuatu pada tempatnya yang betul. Menurutnya, rasa keadilan ini telah tertanam dalam diri setiap individu sebelum mereka dilahirkan ke dunia ini, membentuk bahagian penting dalam diri mereka secara semula jadi atau fitrah. Sehubungan dengan itu, dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa tindakan ketidakadilan yang disebabkan oleh tekanan dalam masyarakat Minang tentang materialisme dan memperkecilkan perasaan cinta antara pasangan kekasih yang ingin berkahwin, seperti yang ditonjolkan dalam novel-novel Hamka, sebagai bertentangan dengan rasa keadilan ini. Kesimpulannya, kepatuhan yang tegar kepada undang-undang dan adat resam Minang seperti yang dipaparkan dalam novel-novel Hamka boleh dilihat bukan sahaja merugikan masyarakatnya tetapi juga bertentangan dengan fitrah semula jadi manusia.

Kata kunci: Hamka, novel, keadilan sosial, perkahwinan, Adat Papatih, fitrah

INTRODUCTION

Before the Second World War, the traditional romantic motif of heterosexual lovers having to face conflict in the form of parental objection to their union was popular in modern literature produced by writers living in the “new Malay society” of Nusantara, or Malay Archipelago. This theme is evident in many novels published in Indonesia before the Second World War, such as Abdul Muis’ *Azab dan Sengsara* (1928), Marah Rusli’s *Siti Nurbaya* (1922) and Nur Sutan Iskandar’s *Salah Pilih* (1928). A similar motif also appeared in Malaya, such as in Syed Syekh al-Hadi’s *Hikayat Faridah Hanom* (1925). As Jakob Sumardjo (1990) noted, “The futility of falling in love due to the obstacles posed by parents who want their children to marry rich and highly-respected people (in the sense of having high social rank or social status) ...became a favourite theme in the 30s” (1990:59). One writer who was well known for writing on this theme is Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah (1908–1981), better known as Hamka. A man of many talents, Hamka is recognised today as a theologian, thinker, travel writer, historian, and fiction writer. His success as a writer of religious texts and fictional novels is even more astounding, considering that he did not receive any formal education in either of these genres. Born into a religious Minangkabau family in Sungai Batang, West Sumatra, Indonesia, Hamka studied under his father, a well-known religious scholar, before pursuing his studies in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. He only returned to his hometown after being summoned by his family, who wanted him to get married. His vast knowledge of theology and proficiency in Arabic propelled him to become the best-known Nusantara scholar on Islam. He was also a prolific novelist, having developed his talent in writing fiction from his habit of reading novels as a young boy in his pastime (H. Rushdi Hamka, 2008). As a novelist who published during this period, Hamka’s contribution to this trend, as this paper argues, lies not so much in his similar treatment of the type of objections the lovers encounter in his novels, but more in his fictional showcasing of the concept of social justice that this paper shows to be derived from a theological perspective. As his novels illustrate, the obstacle to true love primarily appears in *Adat Papatih*, a set of social contracts and traditions that the Minangkabau people of Sumatra, Indonesia, still practice today. In Hamka’s novels, two young lovers are portrayed as shouldering the heavy consequences of being prohibited from marrying each other because the young woman’s mother wants her to marry a wealthy man. This paper argues that Hamka portrays this injustice as the

outcome of defying mankind's natural disposition to be just (*adl*), which is to place things in their proper place.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hamka's novels can be read from several perspectives. Instead of evaluating his works from a literary standpoint, a substantial number of works have scrutinised his novels from a sociological approach, wherein his plots are shown to be connected to the social reality of the Minangkabau people. The qualitative descriptive method was used in these writings to study his novels for their rendition of Minangkabau traditions and customs. Also, most of the data cited are from socio-historical sources, basing appreciation for his novels on their socio-historical value rather than literary value. For example, Jasril's article (2017) focused on the resistance against the Minangkabau matrilineal system shown by its male members in the form of migration. Using heuristic and hermeneutic approaches, Jasril argued that this is reflected in its traditional forms of literature (even though this is never described in detail) and in Hamka's novel, *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van der Wijck* (hereafter referred to as *TKVW*). He cited passages and dialogues in *TKVW* that show this resistance and justified it by mentioning that some Minangkabau customs conflict with Islamic teachings. Male migration is also emphasised in Ikhawanudin Nasution et al. (2023) on Hamka's novels. Instead of relying on literary sources, Ikhawanudin et al. interviewed Minangkabau men who migrated, and connected their findings to how Hamka's novels portray male migration. In other words, the findings of this sociological study were also supported by a content analysis of Hamka's novels. It is notable from the interviews that Indonesia's rapid modernisation in recent decades has caused many Minangkabau men today to be less resistant to migration than they were in Hamka's time.

Several articles have also taken a historical approach to study the period when Hamka published his novels, even though the novels contain only scant details of actual events. Although articles, such as those by Suhadak (2023) and Mohamad Ramdon Dasuki (2020), state Hamka's novels in their titles, they mainly cover historical events that happened during their publication. While Suhadak's study has a short biography of Hamka's life and a brief description of the plot of *TKVW*, it lists the titles of noble people in the novel as a form of an anthropological study of the period in which the story was published. Grouped under this type of socio-historical study but with

a focus on another ethnic group in *TKVM* is Abdul Kadir and Aziz Thaba's (2019), which concentrated more on the Makassar people. This focus was achieved by limiting the analysis to one of the protagonists of *TKVW*, who descends from a Minangkabau father and a Makassar mother. It explains Zainuddin's vigorous defence of his dignity, which Hayati's family tramples on by rejecting his marriage proposal, to the importance of defending one's honour in Makassar society. Through this, the researchers elucidated on Zainuddin's reluctance to marry Hayati even when they have the freedom to do so when her husband dies.

Approaching Hamka's novels from the framework of moral criticism, several articles have analysed their contents for pedagogical purposes since the same novels are included in Indonesia's secondary school curriculum on literature. Deby Rodearni Simbolon et al. (2022) attempted to analyse values from religious, moral and cultural sources, among others, in *TKVW* and its relevance as a teaching tool for secondary school students. Like many papers cited here, this study used the qualitative descriptive content analysis method to study the novel. They cited instances wherein values are mentioned and categorised under the abovementioned categories. Sharing Simbolon et al.'s interest in the pedagogical use of Hamka's novels is Somae (2021), whose paper is a qualitative descriptive content analysis of Islamic teachings in Hamka's *Merantau ke Deli*. He also applied a sociological approach in his study by arguing that the Islamic family values framework practised in the Indonesian context sometimes conflicts with Islamic teachings, as it tends to follow the people's traditional values over those of Islam. In Somae's opinion, Hamka's novels should be studied for their representations of Islamic family values under the objectives of Shariah law (*Maqasid Sharia*). Somae also asserted that through his stories, Hamka invites society to practise fundamental Islamic teachings regarding family values unadulterated by traditional clan laws, that may be unjust.

Several quantitative studies have used a lexicon-based approach to extract sentiments in digital texts, also called sentiment analysis, to study values in Hamka's novels. Using this method, Bukit (2023) argued that *Terusir* contains social values that could be divided into five categories – love, responsibility, care, empathy and support as well as the number of times these are mentioned in the text. Bukit's study found that love is the most common sentiment in the novel. From this, the researcher further specified and categorised the types of love in the book, identifying 31 kinds of love.

Considering that Hamka mainly wrote about male oppression in his novels, a surprisingly large number of critical writings have used the feminist critical approach to study how women are represented as a source of female empowerment while being simultaneously oppressed by society in his novels. Helda (2016) discussed women's self-esteem in *Di Bawah Lindungan Kaabah* (hereafter referred to as *DBLK*). Adapting the qualitative descriptive method in her study, she argued that the novel highlights the high position and self-esteem that the female characters have in themselves. Similarly, Hidayah Budi Qur'ani (2019) also viewed Hamka's novel, particularly *TKVW*, as projecting the high position that Minangkabau women possess in their matrilineal society and how this upholds their dignity. Her findings suggest that Hayati, the female protagonist in *TKVW*, perfectly embodies the ideal Minangkabau woman and provides a list of positive personality traits connected to her high self-esteem. Similar findings were obtained in a study by Lizawati (2023) on the representations of women in Indonesian novels, including Hamka's *TKVW*. Unlike Hidayah, Lizawati viewed Hayati's traits as external and internal sources of attraction. Using methods similar to previous studies, including quantitative and qualitative descriptive content analysis, she argued that by cultivating interest in the attractive qualities of a young woman like Hayati, teachers could encourage their female students at secondary schools to develop these traits. Using a quantitative lexicon-based sentiment analysis on a digital text of *TKVW*, she conducted sentiment and content analyses on the frequency and places where the descriptions of Hayati's attractiveness are mentioned in the novel. Like Lizawati's study, Syifa Fadiyah and Nawawi (2023) also demonstrated how one of Hamka's novels, *Terusir*, highlights the positive characteristics of its female protagonist, Mariah. Given her personality traits, they put forth that Mariah survived being victimised, marginalised, subordinated and stereotyped in the novel. Concerning the issue of gender inequality, the study by Ahmad Mukhibun and Wardini (2023) highlighted the problems women have to face in society, as depicted in *Terusir*. Using lexicon-based sentiment and content analyses on a digital text of *Terusir*, they approached it through a feminist literary criticism framework. Their findings suggest that the most dominant forms of gender injustice in the novel are negative stereotypes and violence against the female characters. Another study by Siti Hajar Che Man (2008) deemed Hamka's representation of women's position in society within the context of his novels as disparaging and unjust. Through her content analysis, she argued that while Hamka's writings should not be

approached through Western feminist theory, his novels do not appear to support women's rights as the female characters are represented as barely surviving amidst their demeaning living circumstances.

Finally, there is one study that focused on concepts in Islamic theology in Hamka's novels. Yuseri Ahmad and Marina Munira Abdul Mutalib (2023) explored the idea of *qada* and *qadar* in a study of cause and effect within Islamic theology. Since Hamka was a well-known Islamic theologian, this study is a qualitative conceptual content analysis of the two theological concepts deduced from his three novels: *TKVW*, *DBLK* and *Terusir*. The researchers concluded that the main lesson regarding these concepts is that one cannot escape from one's destiny. The current study is similar to that of Yuseri and Marina as it also analyses Hamka's novels for their theological and philosophical description of an Islamic concept. However, this study focuses on their depiction of justice (*adl* in Arabic), specifically social justice. Previous researchers have given minimal attention to his novels, viewing these only as further support for Hamka's philosophical ideas. For example, a book chapter by Abdul Rahman Abdul Aziz (2008) is a qualitative theological study of ethics, mainly in Hamka's philosophical writings, before discussing a few of his novels to illustrate his arguments further.

While most critical writings reviewed here emphasise Islamic teachings and values in Hamka's novel, they have an obvious shortcoming. Most researchers cited here do not view Hamka's novels as fictional narratives that may need further support from his non-fictional works, even though several of his novels include events that contradict Islamic teachings. For example, in *Si Sabariah* (1928), the male protagonist murders his wife before committing suicide. By citing his non-fictional writings, this study attempts to provide further support for the argument that Hamka viewed some of the customs of his people as being opposed to the teachings of Islam, particularly the concept of social justice.

METHODOLOGY

The notion of justice as a personal form of social responsibility is best described in the philosophical writings of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, Malaysia's contemporary philosopher on Islamic theology in Nusantara. According to him, justice is more than a state apparatus for distributing benefits and providing corrective and restorative measures for safeguarding interpersonal relationships. In his book *On Justice and the Nature of Man* (2015), which is inspired by Quranic verses in Surah

al-Nisa and Surah al-Mu'minun, al-Attas reiterates the Islamic view of justice as putting together everything in its right and proper place. This act is not brought about by any compulsion that might have come from an external authority. Instead, it results from a personal recognition that originates from the wisdom in a person's soul. Being just is an act of wisdom (al-Attas, 2015: 13–14), and this wisdom leads a person to a state of happiness as he or she acknowledges his or her rightful place in the scheme of God's creations and relationship with the Almighty. According to al-Attas, justice (*adl*) is defined as: "...peace and security and tranquillity of the heart; it is knowledge, and knowledge is true belief; it is knowing one's rightful, and, hence, proper place in the realm of Creation and one's proper relationship with the Creator" (al-Attas, 2015:26).

The power to implement justice to the self, according to al-Attas, alludes to the constant affirmation and fulfilment of the original Covenant, or *Mishaq*, in which each soul is sealed with Allah SWT before being born into this world. Hence, justice in Islam is not merely a concept referring to a state of affairs that can only operate within a two-person relation or dual-party-relation situation (al-Attas, 2015:26); it also refers to the notion of natural disposition (*fitrah*), in which mankind is naturally created to obey Allah SWT and the natural law as dictated by Him. In the Quran, we are reminded of our original Covenant with Him (Surah al-Maida, 5:7):

"And [always] remember the blessings which God has bestowed upon you and the solemn pledge by which He bound you to Himself when you said, "We have heard, and we pay heed." Hence, remain conscious of God: verily, God has full knowledge of what is in the hearts [of men]"

Hence, natural disposition (*fitrah*) is not only one's submission to the will of Allah S.W.T., but also the realisation of this Covenant by mankind (al-Attas, 2015:12). While being just (*adl*) includes the freedom to act according to one's wishes, the self can also be unjust (*zulm*) to itself and, thereby, violate the contract that his or her soul has made with Allah SWT (al-Attas, 2015:27). Likewise, Hamka also had similar notions of *zulm* and the injustices that one does to oneself (Hamka, 1985:290).

This paper is a qualitative content analysis of the selected texts using the close-reading method of analysing essential passages in the text that discuss the concept of social justice, as elucidated in the Islamic philosophical works of al-Attas and Hamka. The data is mainly derived from primary sources, such as the selected original Malay novels by Hamka and his philosophical

writings. Secondary sources of the works mentioned above are articles and books published in Malay and English in Malaysia and Indonesia. The procedures undertaken in this study are listed as follows: (1) identifying the issue of social justice in the selected literary texts; (2) analysing Hamka's life and his understanding of and belief in social justice; (3) analysing the theme of social justice in the selected literary texts; (4) applying the Islamic conceptual framework of social justice in the content analysis of the selected literary texts; (5) analysing and interpreting the texts by presenting the data in written form; and, finally, (6) concluding the findings of this study.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Hamka and His Concept of Social Justice

Hamka's *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van der Wijck* (1937/1987) (TKVW), as in many of his novels, deals with the problems that Minangkabau male members face in a matrilineal society. Its customary laws of *Adat Papatih*, which they adhere to, heavily side with its female members in matters of inheritance. The female members are set to inherit all of their families' possessions, leaving the male members not only penniless but, in many cases, also homeless. As such, elderly adult males are forced to live in *surau*, or small Islamic places of worship, because they are prohibited from living in the family home owned by their wives and other female members. This arrangement seems acutely unjust, considering that they are the ones who are expected to shoulder the expense of building their marital house, in addition to purchasing a plot of land for paddy planting, as well as gold jewellery for their wives. As a result, according to Navis (1999), a pattern of male migration to other parts of Indonesia emerged when Minangkabau men were forced to search elsewhere for their livelihood and fortune. At the same time, the Minangkabau people also lay claim to being highly religious Muslims, having established many religious schools in their region. These schools were built from the private donations of many Minangkabau men who had become successful businessmen abroad. These two societal forces, one matrilineal and the other religious, are represented in the Minangkabau proverb, *Adat yang kawi, Syarak yang lazim* ("Tradition that is strengthened, religious laws that are obeyed") (Hamka, 1929/2006:167). While the two elements could be viewed as opposing forces, the Minangkabau people often treat them as complementary. As Jasril (2017) observed, the Minangkabau people subscribe to the notion of *adat* (tradition) in various matters related to marriage and

the division of inheritance. However, religion features prominently in their society through the prevalence of the mosque institution in every part of the Minangkabau region (Jasril, 2017:4). Similarly, Hamka (1929/2006) has mentioned and declared that he is proud of his Minangkabau tradition while concomitantly stressing that this includes its long contribution to the Islamic legacy of Nusantara.

At the same time, Hamka was also intent on exposing situations where rigid adherence to *Adat Papatih* can be seen as going against Islam's religious injunctions. His novels frequently feature various forms of abuses and corruption that the system lends itself to when too much power is given to both the female leaders of the tribe (*suku*) within the larger Minangkabau society as well as the families' immediate elderly male relative(s) (*mamak*), who act not only as the male representative of his nieces and nephews, but also as the intermediary between this closed matrilineal tribe and the rest of the world. Following Gramsci, Nita Kartika Sari et al. (2018) described the various types of hegemony the elderly male relatives have over those around them. In Hamka's *TKVW* (1937/1987), Datuk Mentari Labih's hegemony, which allows him to abuse power given to him, causes his nephew and the father of the male protagonist, Pandeka Sutan, to become enraged with his uncle and accidentally kill the former after unsuccessfully pleading with him to allow a land belonging to his mother to be sold so he could get married using the obtained money. A system that gives unconstrained authority to the elderly male family members is liable to be abused, as shown through the uncle's outright declaration that he is given the freedom to do whatever he wishes (Hamka, 1937/1987:6).

Itu kuasaku, saya mamak disini, menghitamkan dan memutihkan kalian semuanya dan mengantungkan tinggi membuang jauh.

[That is within my power to do, I am the mamak here, either to blacken and to enlighten anyone or anything, either to uphold or abandon anything.]

The fatal confrontation between uncle and nephew sets the course for the rest of the novel, when Pandeka, whose punishment for killing his uncle is his banishment from his motherland, is forced to travel to another part of Indonesia, where he eventually marries a woman outside of his tribe. After his parents' death, his son, the protagonist Zainuddin, returns to his father's homeland to establish connections with his paternal family. When he falls in love with a young woman of noble ancestry, Hayati, the fact that he has

mixed blood, as his mother was not of Minangkabau ancestry, is used by the Minangkabau people to ostracise him. Eventually, Hayati is married off to her friend's wealthy brother, but the man soon neglects her as he returns to his womanising ways.

Social stratification is shown in the novel as the primary reason why Hayati's family rejects Zainuddin's proposal. Not only is Zainuddin's mother someone from another tribe, but he also lacks reasonably good financial standing to be considered a suitable match for the noble-born Hayati. Hayati's male relative (*mamak*) further cautions her to reject him as a suitor (Hamka, 1937/1987:53).

Social and financial standings, as the novel indicates, are obstacles that society intentionally creates because it no longer possesses the rightful wisdom to differentiate between what can be considered just and the excessive value it places on an individual's origin and possession of wealth and social status. Just as Zainuddin, the same unfortunate destiny befalls other characters in Hamka's novels, such as Hamid in *Di Bawah Lindungan Kaabah* (*Under the Protection of the Kaabah*) (1936/1987) and Adnan in *Keadilan Ilahi* (*Allah's Justice*, henceforth referred to as *KI*) (1939/2008), simply because the male suitors have a lower social standing than their female lovers even though both are from the same Minangkabau tribe. In *TKVW*, the narrator also makes a scathing remark on the behaviour of many respected members of Minangkabau society when they, on the one hand, treat with contempt any decent young man with modest means who has expressed his interest in marrying a young woman of their tribe, and, on the other hand, give the opposite treatment to a man of high ranking who has a similar interest towards any of their young women. As the narrator relates (Hamka, 1937/1987: 55–56):

Seorang anak muda, yang berkenalan dengan seorang perempuan, dengan maksud baik, maksud hendak kawin, dibusukkan, dipandang hina. Tetapi seorang yang dengan gelar bangsawannya, dengan title datuk dan penghulunya mengahwini anak gadis orang berapa dia suka, kawin di sana, cerai di sini, tinggalkan anak di kampung anu dan cicirkan di kampung ini, tidak tercela, tidak dihinakan.

[A young man who has become acquainted with a young woman with honourable intentions, intending to get married, is denigrated, detested. But for an aristocratic man, with the title of a *datuk* or *penghulu* or community leader, who marries anyone's daughter as he pleases, marrying again yet another, divorcing her whenever it suits him, abandoning his

wife and children wherever it pleases him, is not detested, his behaviour is not found deplorable.]

Through his narrator and other non-fictional writings, Hamka could be said to support the belief that social justice is undermined by values endorsed by society, as it considers the need to have elevated appearances and prestige far more essential than personal feelings, like falling in love.

Like other prominent theologians and philosophers, such as al-Ghazali (c. 1058–1111), Hamka wrote several works dealing with fundamental concepts and values in society, such as justice. In *Falsafah Hidup* (or *Philosophy of Life*) (1939/1985:85), he writes about the nature of justice as a universal concept built upon ideas on equality, mutual benefit and integrity, similar to those of major philosophers such as Aristotle. Yet he chooses not to emphasise its judiciary and political implementations, preferring to view justice as a personal attribute that needs to be nurtured in the mind of every individual. For him, the most essential aspect of a person's social responsibility is *hikmah*, which is the regard and respect for another's right to life, freedom and individuality, as well as belief and ownership. A sense of justice within the self, for Hamka, would allow the person to feel heartfelt empathy, especially for those who are weak and oppressed. Personal empathy invites the cultivation of other values, such as the willingness to engage in charitable works and altruistic deeds. According to Hamka (1939/1985), successfully nurturing these values would result in situations where a person would naturally feel guilty when committing an act that harms others. If the act is committed, the person would eventually surrender himself or herself willingly to the authorities, asking to be sentenced with a form of punishment that is proportionate, in his or her heart, to the nature of his or her misdeeds (p. 85–86).

In *TKVW*, numerous examples show the Minangkabau people, particularly Hayati's parents, being unjust (*zulm*) to themselves by insisting that Zainuddin accumulate enough wealth before the lovers can get married. Conflict arises in the novel when the young lovers are still prevented from entering into matrimony, even though Zainuddin has saved enough for this purpose. Despite Hayati's initial reluctance to an arranged marriage, she is later convinced by her family and a friend to marry a wealthy man. Yet Hamka, through the narrator, openly condemns such a practice, as for him, falling in love is one of the most important forms of natural disposition (*fitrah*) that mankind is meant to experience as a way to procreate and flourish. As the narrator mentions in *TKVW* (Hamka, 1937/1987:47):

Cinta adalah iradat Tuhan, dikirimkan ke dunia supaya tumbuh. Kalau diletakkan diatas tanah yang lekang dan tandus, tumbuhnya akan menyiksakan orang lain. Kalau dia datang kepada hati yang keruh dan kepada budi yang rendah, dia akan membawa kerusakan. Tetapi jika dia hinggap pada hati yang suci, dia akan mewariskan kemuliaan, keikhlasan dan taat pada Ilahi.

[Love is Allah's iradat. Bestowed upon this earth to grow. If implanted on a barren land, whatever grows from it would hurt everyone else. If it were to arise in a heart that is dirty and an unrefined mind, it would bring destruction. But if it flourishes in a pure heart, it would beget integrity, sincerity and obedience to Allah.]

As the passage clarifies, love serves the heart's function and is naturally bestowed by the Divine on His creations. Hence, individuals falling in love and getting married are portrayed in *TKVW* and his other novels as a natural process that should not be disrupted or prohibited by societal laws and customs that privilege socially constructed status, such as social and financial ranks. To be unjust (*zulm*) is to keep insisting on privileging socially constructed stratification above mankind's natural disposition as created by Allah SWT.

Nevertheless, within this "unjust" society, justice can still be meted out, particularly to those who have not been just to others, such as Sutan Marah Husin, the antagonist in *KI*. After abandoning his first wife, whom he married because she was young and pretty, he receives his appropriate punishment when he is deserted by a wealthy widow whom he takes as his second wife. Towards the end of the novel, his lifeless body is recovered from the marshes after he has committed suicide. The society that revered him for his wealth now disregards him as a mere nobody when he no longer has any wealth. As the passage mentions (Hamka, 1939/2008:122–123):

Wangnya yang berbilang dahulu, sekarang tidakkah beliau ditolongnya? Orang-orang kampung yang dahulu berlumba-lumba menjemputnya jadi menantu manakah mereka, mengapa tidak datang? Mengapa bila bertemu mereka telah mengelak, dan tanda kasihan mereka hanya menggelengkan kepala?

[Where has his enviable wealth from the past gone? Has he not benefited from it? The villagers who competed with each other to offer him their daughters' hands in marriage, why are they not here with him? Why is it that when they are about to meet, they try to avoid him, and their compassion for him now is shown through their shaking heads?]

Sometimes, characters who have been unjust (*zulm*) blame fate (*takdir*) for the unfortunate event that eventually befalls them. This mistake in shifting the blame from the protagonist to an uncontrollable external force is corrected in *KI* (Hamka, 1963/2010:15) by a wise old man who says:

Tidak Azhar, takdir itu melalui sebab dan akibatm tetapi ada garis yang dilaluinya. Takdir yang ada sekarang ini menurut fikiranku adalah buatan manusia. Yang benci kepada Mariah yang dapat mencuri hatimu, tetapi mereka tidak tahu bahawa dengan berbuat begini, mereka sebenarnya mencelakakan dirimu sendiri

[No, Azhar, fate follows the rule of cause and effect. Fate does not immediately occur; it must follow its regular route. I believe mankind has caused the fate that has befallen you right now. These people are full of hatred for Mariah, who has stolen your heart, but they do not know that by doing this, they are bringing evil tidings on you.]

According to Yuseri Ahmad and Marina Munira Abdul Mutalib (2020), there is a strong connection between cause and effect in many of Hamka's novels. In the case of *KI*, since Mariah's husband refuses to acknowledge her innocence, his act of betrayal haunts him until the end of his life.

Striking a balance between being just and unjust is shown in Hamka's novel to be difficult for individuals if Quranic injunctions and Islamic teachings do not guide their actions. His novel *Merantau ke Deli (Bound for Deli)* (1940/2004) illustrates this difficulty. Whether or not a husband who practices polygamy can be just (*adl*) to both his wives occurs in the mind of Poniem, the first wife and female protagonist. Once happily married to her husband, she finds herself extraordinarily demanding in ensuring that he treats her fairly, as he has taken the hand of a much younger woman in marriage. Here, readers are made aware that justice is linked not only to equity, mutual benefit and integrity but also to matters of the heart and emotions. In a monogamous marriage, the wife may initially be willing to compromise on the treatment that she receives from her husband because she feels an emotional attachment to him as his only wife. Yet once the husband marries again, the same wife would require even better treatment from him since the power dynamics of their marital relationship have changed with the inclusion of a potential rival. Whether justice is consistently being carried out now relies on ensuring that the emotions of all the persons involved are considered because they must be willing to perceive that their needs are being justly met under Islamic law and teachings. The concept of social justice and its intricacies were so crucial to Hamka that he wrote a book on this

subject. In *Islam: Revolusi Ideologi dan Keadilan Sosial (Islam: Revolution, Ideology and Social Justice)* (1950/2006), Hamka further provides instances from the Quran and Hadith that discuss situations that depict the way this social justice is carried out.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be said that the concept of social justice is fundamental to Hamka's novels. He presents it as very nuanced and refined, as it addresses individual and societal rights, and connects it to mankind's natural disposition (*fitrah*) that is frequently violated due to materialistic desires. As shown in Hamka's novels, justice is not about following societal laws, particularly those perpetuating injustices, but placing things properly or following one's natural disposition. As Hamka makes clear through *TKVW* and his non-fictional writings, being just (*adl*) to oneself and others is about following the natural predisposition that mankind is born with when they agreed to fulfil their original Covenant or (*Mishaq*) with Allah SWT. Societal or individual obsession with materialism, as his novels show, is an act of injustice (*zulm*) because it could go against mankind's natural disposition that helps create a balanced and harmonious relationship among members in a community. When acts of injustice are allowed to rule over Allah SWT's justice in the name of following a certain custom (*adat*), disaster is bound to happen, and personal lives are ruined to keep up with appearances and follow tradition. While Hamka himself respected *Adat Papatih*, which the Minangkabau people had inherited from their forefathers, he viewed it cautiously. He saw that it had to follow the dictates of a higher authority in life, Islamic teachings, as dictated by Allah SWT through our natural disposition.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data in the form of text corpus discussed in this study is available on the Royal Asiatic Society website; likewise all the writings referred to as references can also be accessed freely and openly.

DECLARATIONS

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