

## Reducing Prejudice and Reinforcement of Religious Tolerance Across the Fictional World

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**Abstract:** *In post-pandemic era, prejudice remains an important theme in public issues. Tensions between cultural, social, and even religious elements are still triggered by prejudice, especially religious prejudice. Even though conflicts occur due to a variety of factors, religion is frequently a significant factor. Religious issues frequently create religious intolerance. Religion is considered paradoxical (a paradox of faith) because it generates religious excitement (creating and even preventing prejudice formation) as well as moral and ethical decline. The imaginative world (literary works) is transformed into a communicative and contemplative medium, as well as a critical and reflective medium toward socio-cultural phenomena from/to the world of reality. Imaginary works become a medium of communication and peace-building for the development of religious tolerance through imaginary narratives that are able to present a diversity-oriented dialogue.*

*This paper discusses on how Saddam Hussein's novel 'Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un' reflects prejudice reduction. The texts shared a discourse on socio-cultural contact, inter-religious dialogue (inter-group friendship), inclusive theology, opposing prejudice, conflict resolution, individual personality, religious experience, and religious attitudes, which play important roles in the reinforcement of religious tolerance. Data on religious values (Islam) were collected from the novel's text using the qualitative-interpretative method and Gordon Allport's perspective on the nature of prejudice, and then explored using the technique of explication du texte. This paper argues that reinforcement of religious tolerance can be carried out continuously by discovering the fundamental values of religion and producing inclusive theological images so that they are more appreciative of diversity. The Implications of the findings of this study are expected to refute the assumption that religion is a final frontier (and/or has the potential prejudice) of personal prejudice, stereotype, and discrimination, with attitudes to faith driving negative perceptions more than ethnicity or nationality.*

**Keywords:** Reducing prejudice, imaginary work, religious tolerance, novel, diversity.

**Abstrak:** *Prejudice masih menjadi tema penting dalam isu-isu publik di era pasca pandemi COVID-19. Ketegangan antar unsur kultural, sosial, bahkan agama masih dipicu oleh adanya prejudice, terutama prasangka keagamaan (religious prejudice), meskipun konflik terjadi disebabkan oleh faktor yang kompleks, namun agama seringkali menjadi faktor yang signifikan. Isu keagamaan seringkali menyebabkan perang keyakinan agama dan menjadikan sikap yang tidak toleran. Agama dinilai paradoks karena melahirkan kehebohan beragama (menciptakan bahkan mencegah prejudice formation) dan kebangkrutan moralitas. Dunia imajinatif (karya sastra) menjadi media komunikatif dan kontemplatif, bahkan menjadi media kritis dan reflektif terhadap gejala dan fenomena sosial-kultural dari/terhadap dunia realitas. Karya sastra menjadi media komunikasi dan peace-building bagi tercapainya religious tolerance melalui narasi imajinatif yang mampu menghadirkan dialog orientasi keberagaman.*

*Diskusi ini berfokus pada cara dunia imajinatif (karya sastra) novel Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un Karya Saddam Hussein merefleksikan prejudice reduction. Teks novel tersebut menyajikan diskursus social-cultural contact, inter-religious dialogue (inter-group friendship), inclusive theologies, opposing prejudice, resolusi konflik, kepribadian individu, pengalaman keberagaman, dan sikap keberagaman yang menjadi bagian penting dalam menciptakan religious tolerance. Dengan metode kualitatif-interpretatif dan perspektif the nature of prejudice Gordon Allport, data nilai-nilai keagamaan (Islam) dikumpulkan dari teks novel tersebut kemudian dieksplorasi dengan teknik explication du texte. Kajian ini menemukan bahwa penguatan toleransi beragama dapat dilakukan secara terus menerus dengan cara menemukan nilai-nilai fundamental agama dan memproduksi images teologi inklusif sehingga lebih apresiatif terhadap keragaman. Implikasi dari temuan kajian ini diharapkan dapat membantah asumsi yang menyebut agama sebagai sumber prasangka atau berpotensi memunculkan prasangka, stereotype, diskriminasi, dan perilaku destruktif manusia.*

**Keywords:** Reducing prejudice, karya sastra, religious tolerance, novel, keberagaman.

## Introduction

Intolerance manifests itself in many various forms, including those related to ideology (Birdir, Sayilan, & Adams, 2022), religion (Henning, Vollan, & Balafoutas, 2022), politics (Badaan & Jost, 2020), gender (Schnabel, 2018), gender (Schnabel, 2018), culture (Bilancini, Boncinelli, & Wu, 2018), sexism (Etengoff & Lefevor, 2020), social identity and discrimination (Yeste et.al, 2020), ethnic and atheist belief groups (Rowatt & al Kire, 2020). Prejudice,

particularly religious prejudice, causes tensions between cultural, social, and even religious elements. Religion is viewed as an *in-the-around* phenomenon in this context, rather than as an ideal sense (Allport, 1966, p.447). For Allport, religion in the context of *in-the-around* is paradoxical (*there is something about religion that makes for prejudice and something about it that unmakes prejudice*. This he calls a *paradoxical situation*, Allport, 1954, p.447) As well as Hunsberger (*can both reduce & exacerbate prejudice*, Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005, p.807), even religion is also considered contradictory (Allport, 1966, p.447) because religion can both be a prejudice formation and prejudice reduction and also religion is the warp of brotherhood and the woof of bigotry (Allport 1966, p.447). Prejudice is defined as *thinking ill of others without sufficient warrant* (Fichter & LaFarge in Allport, 1954, p.6). However, prejudice is one of the potential triggers for cultural, social, and even religious conflicts that we cannot ignore, and for that reason, prejudice reduction can play a major role in overcoming these research problems.

In recent years, terrorism has been associated with Islam and violence (radicalism) has been associated with other religions such as Christianity (Liorent-Bedmar, 2020, p.1) and this has succeeded in bringing Islam into a major international concern (Garcia & Talavero, 2019). In the name of religion and belief, various forms of violence and terrible events are carried out (*horrors and excesses have been committed in the name of religion or belief*, Krishnaswami, 1960, p.1). On this basis, prejudice against religion began to grow and strengthen, such as prejudice against Islam. This gave rise to Islamophobia over time. Islamophobia is blamed for intolerance, discrimination, and marginalization (Dauda, 2020, p.258). Islam itself is *religion of peace* (in principle and in practice) opposing various forms of oppression, such as discrimination, stereotype, persecution, and others (Dauda, 2020, p.259). Liorent-Bedmar sees two things that must be distinguished when talking about the relations between various forms of violence and Islam by offering the terminology of *Islamic radicalism* with the term *Islamic-inspired violent radicalism*, as an effort to reduce prejudice against Islam because the two relations, for him, are different (Liorent-Bedmar, 2020, p. 1-2). Indeed, Muslim identity groups are aware that the extremist violence carried out in the name of Islam (*the fringe militant Muslims*) are detrimental to all Muslims (Sabic-el Rayess, 2020, p.2).

Literature, one of which is the novel genre as the *heterocosm*, is part of the basic human spiritual needs that function as a medium and communication process that provides deep and rich understanding, this happens because literature presents a communicative structure, dialogical,

and dialectical with the real world as seen in the novel *Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un* by Saddam Hussein which is seen from the quality of its elements' interrelationships. In terms of the literary approach, religious prejudice can be interpreted as a perspective defect caused by an error in processing information (in Allport's concept, this is referred to as premature judgement, Allport, 1954, p.6). In the context of this prejudice reduction, *Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un* does not produce actual battle in the world of reality and this discourse, which is a view point in this research. Literature does not only talk about the aesthetics of language in and of itself, *an sich*, but it becomes more interesting if one considers the context in which the literary work created, by whom the literary work was written, and what phenomena were deposited in the womb of literary work, this is no exception with the novel *Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un* by Saddam Hussein. Although the contemporary literary vision strongly rejects the ideology of grand narratives and artistic activities carried out solely by certain people, Hussein's novel refutes this. By stating that art activities can be carried out by anyone who is moved to provide a different understanding on an object or phenomenon (*to have a rich understanding*).

By the *licentia poetica*, Hussein found a huge space to do *ostranenie* in his novel and this needs to be explained because this is where the problem of art and its aesthetic lies. The refraction and reflection that Hussein does in his novel does not merely describe the actual situation (objective reality) in the real world, in the form of *praejudicium* with the premature judgement on certain religious identity groups, but Hussein changes it in such a way according to the quality of his creativity by reinterpreting (*re-ligo*) *praejudicium* by parsing the components and how they work so that errors in processing information can be significantly reduced. However, Hussein's interpretation of reality (reality as a social construction) is subjective-interpretative, as evidenced by the characters in the *Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un*, who cannot be compared to the characters in real world that he describes. However, *Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un* is not just an individual symptom of Hussein but also a social phenomenon as a product of a society. This means that this research needs to be carried out in order to re-present (*re-ligo* in Mangunwijaya's view, Mangunwijaya, 1988) and evaluate whether *Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un* is dialectical with the real world by providing various insights and benefits to the social structure that produces it (*dulce et utile, prodesse and delectare*). Literature as an aesthetic object can be enjoyed by anyone (*aesthete*) and can be discussed and even studied by *aesthetician*.

## Research Method

The primary data for this study was obtained from the text of *Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un*, which is completed with various secondary literature, such as articles, e-books, and other digitally obtained information that has a high level of relevance to the research problem, thus assisting me in crawling and data processing both obtained through the novel text and other secondary texts. After obtaining sufficient data, I conduct an analysis through *explication du texte* by reading it closely and doing it repeatedly, keeping in mind that the language genre used in *Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un* is a metaphor with a high level of interpretation and I do not forget the theological, sociological, ideological, and cultural context in which the novel created. *Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un* in its capacity as an imaginary world is doubtful because its incapability produces actual battle in the context of reality, reflecting real effects in the real world in the form of offering insights on prejudice reduction. In the text of the novel *Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un*, social-cultural contact, inter-religious dialogue (inter-group friendship), inclusive theologies, opposing prejudice, conflict resolution, individual personality, religious experiences, religiosity, and religious values (Islamic values) were collected and explained using a qualitative method by involving the perspective of the nature of prejudice by Gordon Allport in the analysis process.

## Result and Discussion

### 1. Understanding Prejudice and (In)Tolerance Across Fictional Work

*Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un* shows that the influence of an imaginary work is more than just a critical attitudes towards the phenomenon of prejudice between religions, ethnicities, and other social group identities, or even different gender in the real world, which results in discrimination and intolerance, but it is able to increase the sensitivity of the reader to think about re-thought what has become belief and social attitudes because the aesthetic values that are embedded in literary works can provide space for thought while increasing the sharpness of the soul of the readers. The religiosity values is more than just a philosophical debate in the mind of a Muslim, it must be realized in life as both an individual and a social being. Religious attachment can help people control their thoughts and behaviours. Prejudice, defined as *thinking ill of others without sufficient warrant* (Fichter & LaFarge in Allport, 1954, p.6) becomes weak because it does not receive negative energy intake in the form of errors in knowledge processing in the mind. This is due to religious values' ability

to control and direct the people's mind on a path based on religious teachings. As in the following novel text excerpt:

*'And whoever lives and does not obtain the pleasure of Allah and humans, then his life will not be happy (will be miserable) even though he has a lot of wealth' (Hussein, 2003, p.11)*

The inclusive theological discourse in the communicative structure of the *Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un* emphasizes the process of interrelationship between sender and receiver, Hussein as author and reader as aesthete, by utilizing information or knowledge that forms a tolerant individual personality and avoids vested interests. Meanwhile, the dialogical structure emphasizes the activities of the participants involved and essentially presupposes interactions in antagonistic and reciprocal positions and conditions with the social structures around them that present religious experiences and create tolerance. The communicative and dialogic structure built into the text of *Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un* allows the readers to produce a code that provides a broader understanding without being patronizing. The manner in which *Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un* conveys moral messages and life values differs from non-imaginative works, with the literariness that literary works have that can actually drain the reader's energy in understanding literary works and this is where the pleasure of reading lies. In another quote, it is stated:

*'Humans cannot live alone, so after creating the earth, water, and air, Allah (the greatest of Allah) created other creatures, namely animals and plants. Humans were created to be the best of creation in comparison to other creatures, according to one of Allah's verses. Allah created humans higher than other creatures so that they could understand their role in the world's life, be grateful, and learn' (Hussein, 2003, p.8)*

With the dominance of fiction, metaphorical language medium, and references to the real world that has been transformed at a fictional level, *Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un* presents a world view about the basic characteristic of humans, namely as social beings, in various ways, namely through polyvalence expressions where every word is already occupied by voice. Another voice with this awareness, the fault of a prejudiced or intolerable person can be refuted because he indirectly realizes that various forms of prejudice and even

discrimination are based on premature judgement (Allport, 1954, p.6). The text of *Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un* has a bivocal dimension that must be understood in conjunction with its dynamic characteristics, which lie in the fact that every word always moves from one speaker to another, from one social context to another, from one communication process to another, and from one generation to another. Each individual has a unique perception of words and meaning spaces. Hussein's novel text reflects the quality of humanity through the interaction process of the reader's mental structure and provides an interlocutor's answer space that occurs when the reader is confronted with the novel's information.

## 2. Prejudice and Stereotype: Disapproval and Reduction Across *Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un*

The imaginary work *Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un* is allegedly a reflection of social life. This novel written not from a cultural vacuum that became the author's imagination, but rather from the social and cultural conditions of his life. Hussein seems to understand that prejudice exists in society as a result of differences in the values of beliefs and ideologies, limited or lack of communication, hasty judgements about things, and negative evaluations of certain social groups based on the criteria of their social group, as well as generalizations that simplify things, in his novel, reality is satirized. *Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un* detects the human tendency to categorize and interpret information using inappropriate heuristics, causing humans to create stereotypes and even apply them discriminatorily. Stereotype are not always meaningful and lead to deliberate actions to denigrate and harass, but they more frequently occur as a result of generalizations and simplifications in viewing the world of reality. Finding religious fundamental values in the novel text such as respect for diversity, the prohibition of committing acts of violence is beneficial for prejudice reduction. As evidenced by the following quotation:

*‘If you are forced to perform ijihad, you must be free of all lust and act in accordance with human needs and religious teachings’* (Hussein, 2003, h.37)

Prejudice and stereotype should not be given a portion of human attention because they only serve to blind people to individual differences that cause unfair attitudes. Social categorization, such as in-group bias and homogeneous out-group, as well as the failure of logic, are both caused by affective and cognitive factors, and are satirized nicely in

Hussein's novel, *Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un*. Hussein recognizes that emotions make it difficult for a person to change their perspective and prejudice against something or someone because logical arguments are ineffective in the face of emotions, using creative processes and the imaginative world, it is failure to think logically that causes these prejudices and stereotypes to be jerked by immersing the reader in the atmosphere of certain conditions so that the emotion, Hussein takes the reader to the next atmosphere, namely cognitive, by processing information with diversity as the starting point. However, Hussein realized that stereotypes still exist and are hidden in humans, ready to be activated by other stimuli at any time.

*'in various circumstances, they frequently invite foreign guests to share meat and bread with side dishes, or even just bread and side dishes without meat. Even if the number of people eating it is large, a piece of meat is divided evenly'* (Hussein, 2003, h.13)

Another aspect of *Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un* that is satirized is how stereotype reflects cultural beliefs about certain things or people, as well as how prejudice works in one's mind, specifically the need to express prejudice and the need to maintain a positive self-concept for himself and others. It brings people to a life full of love by presenting the values of justice and religiosity as benchmarks of action in social life, so that social harmony can be achieved and enjoyed by every socio-cultural element that makes up society. Hussein emphasized that religious values are used as the most fundamental principles of life because faith in God has a significant impact on attitudes and behaviours as individuals and social beings, as well as avoiding the illusory correlation, which is an error or tendency to connect two things that are actually unrelated. Various religious-based fundamental values are the key to opposing prejudice and respect for diversity is an important key in creating religious tolerance.

### 3. Religious Tolerance Across Literary Toleration-Based Approaches

Islam teaches its people to spread peace and social harmony with various different beliefs. Interfaith dialogue, which involves putting people of different religions together in one activity with the goal of accepting each other's differences, should be considered in



order to promote religious tolerance. The belief that Islam is a universal religion that is friendly to all humans is one type of awareness that distinguishes a Muslim. This awareness give rise to distinctive socio-religious behaviour such as tolerance, freedom, openness, justice, and fairness. Hussein attempts to return the dialogue about Muslim awareness to his readers through his novel by presenting it again in the dialogue between the characters. Furthermore, *Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un* reduces prejudice, stereotypes, and even discrimination by offering social-cultural contact by promoting inclusive-pluralistic theologies that help teach harmony and brotherhood because they respect the dimensions of difference and the uniqueness of all religion's traditions and more appreciative of diversity.

*"It is true that the best preparation and education is education that teaches the fundamentals of religion and are consistent in carrying out obligations to God and humans (God's rights and human rights) ' (Hussein, 2003, h.44)*

*Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un* depicts how conditions make one another dependent and dependent on one another (*mutual interdependence*) and proposes norms that promote equality among groups. Religion, as an *ideal sense* and source of values, fosters mutual love and care for others while also contributing to human welfare by increasing mutual understanding and acceptance of difference. However, when religion is viewed as *in-the-around* (Allport, 1966, p.447), religion seems to be a paradox/contradiction with this concept. This is Hussein's position in his novel by returning religion to a central position that cannot be negotiable to become a benchmark for human action because religion, after all, determines individual actions, namely meeting the basic needs of individuals in social life. As an imaginary work, *Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un* treats prejudice and stereotype discourse uniquely because it realizes that there is no single thought that is truly unitary, even though uniting thoughts by itself (being united) doesn't means unity, even absolute unity. Hussein seemed to be implying that unity can be achieved in a variety of contexts, including religion and ethnicity, the identity of other social groups, and even gender (*e pluribus unum*).

*Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un* tries to unravel the complicated relationships between prejudice, religious values, and social values. In the novel, religious tolerance allows other identity group, not just minorities, to enjoy their rights without fear of labeling, as well as

the psychological impact that labeling has. Furthermore, Hussein invites readers to become progressive human beings by rejecting irrelevant values and impeding the creation of social harmony among religious communities by forming a shared imagination in realizing an equal, just, and prosperous life. It is as if Hussein vigorously combats various religious issues, which frequently lead to religious wars, in order to strongly challenge various forms of violence and shameful acts that occur in the context of religion.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that the text of the novel *Ukhruj Minha Ya Mal'un* contains a discourse on religious tolerance as well as *satire*. Tolerance can be achieved by making the fundamental values of religion as the benchmark and promoting inclusive-pluralistic theologies in practice so that they are more appreciative of the life of pluralistic society. This is shown by the various perspectives conveyed both through the dialogue between the characters in his novel and the storytelling atmospheres that underlies his imaginary work. The implications of the findings of this research are expected through literary tolerance-based approaches to be able to refute the argument that tells that religion is a source of prejudice or has the potential to give rise to prejudice, stereotype, discrimination, and destructive human behaviour. Based on the findings and the research process that has been carried out, I recommends several things as suggestions for further research, namely research on imaginary work can be conducted without involving the author in the analysis process and not involving the social context in which the imaginary work created. This practice is common in literary-based research, considering that research on imaginary works has different characteristics from non-imaginary works.

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