

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Dignity is an abstract and complex concept derived from Latin *dignus* about honourable quality, high repute or honor or the degree of this, worthiness, a high position, rank or title, stately appearance or manner, or self-respect which exists in every personality with its unique shape and form (Maddi,325). Commonly, in our society, it strictly concerned with ‘ whether we have or we have not’. In this materialistic point of view, dignity is really measured from the number of possession and the kind of ability or skill. Actually it concerned commonly with how honest we are in looking ourselves and how far we can accept any realities which happened, is still happening and will happen to us. The reason why dignity concern with honesty is that honesty has become a major and determine factor in how high we respect ourselves in our perspective to the society as a whole. If we accept our condition honestly and take ourselves as the way we are, then the pride will arouse from ourselves.

Commonly, dignity is rested upon two things: recognition and humiliation. The recognition of our ability will make us to feel honoured and lead us to do better things but it may also make us arrogant. The will make us feel humiliated or offended or on the contrary will raise our spirit to be a better one, better than the one who has insulted us. It is not very easy if the humiliation has become the

culture of society. No matter high is your ability, how good is someone's personality and how bad is someone's eager to be accepted and recognised by the society, when racialism has become the ideology and the colour of skin has become a simple reason of discrimination, then it is very easy for the one who come from the discriminated race will be no one but the junk.

Racialism as one of the oldest ideology in the history of humanity has put its basic thinking upon discrimination on human rights and humiliation of equality. Racialism will take its place anytime and anywhere, especially when being different is a sin and when you are different you can't win. As an ideology without equality for all members of society, we can consider it as a vulnerable one since it stood without the support of the whole society. There will always struggle and rebel to fight the discrimination because of very simple reason: there is no one who accept for being considered as lower and more meaningless than any other people. On the other way, positively, racialism has pushed the oppressed class in society to equalize themselves with other class in society. They will study harder, work harder and do anything better than before to be equal and not to be insulted anymore.

America as one of the largest country in the world with the most plural inhabitant is also facing so many problems as the effect of racialism. From all the ethnic groups and races in this country, the Black is the second largest race which has been through discrimination for years from the White society. Just like any other racial practices, they were discriminated because of simple reason: they

have the black skins. That simple reason furthermore becomes unreasonable prejudices that tend to be humiliation.

Dignity has become a major and essential problem for the Black in America since they came as immigrants in eighteenth century. It is very understandable that the Black have to try so hard to fight and struggle in raising their dignity because, the racial discrimination has become a deep wound in the soul of the black. They need dignity to make communication with other races especially with the White can happen in equal positions. It could happen because of the condition pushed them to believe that they are minority in every aspect of live.

This phenomenon then brought up by some writers into their literary works. They think literature is the right medium to express their ideas and their concerns about these racial matters. As the result, so many literary works emerge as the expression of the Black. At this point, short stories can certainly be used as a tool for the better understanding of the racial discrimination happened in America.

In *Flying Home* the Black American writer, Ralph Ellison, presents a story about young black Air Force training pilot that crashed in a field owned by a white and racist landowner that drove the pilot away although he is badly injured. The young pilot, named Todd, is one of very few blacks (maybe he is the only one) at that time who is able to equal with the white in flying airplane. This is something that makes him face the white with self reliance and underestimate his own race. But then, when he feels superior in front of the white, he makes a fatal

mistake and crashed in front of the white. When he is driven away by the white landowner, he can regain his awareness about his dignity concept that he has made and hold for year. A kind of dignity which pushed himself also to underestimate his society. Dignity in Todd's personality is mostly shaped as outburst of emotion that emerged in the situation where humiliation and harshness takes place.

It is obvious then that the power of the story is on its characterisation. In this short story, Ellison creates Todd as the main character of *Flying Home* that supplies the reader his perspectives toward himself and his society as the main sources to his dignity. At this point, Ellison depicts his main character as a complex one like ordinary human being, therefore, difficult to judge. We can understand his complexity especially on his concept about his dignity if we consider it as a process from his childhood.

With 'go in at the deep end' style Ellison then try to reveal Todd's life and idea honestly and straightforwardly. But the point that bring Ralph Ellison into his most success in gaining attention and revealing reality that this short story is successfully portraying Black's life. Hopefully then it will become one of the best guides we have to a unique American reality generally and to understand one side of the Black mental shape particularly.

It is very interesting and useful analysis to reveal the development of Todd's dignity before the crash and after the crash so we can get a better and further understanding about the development itself and also the reason behind it. What does *happen* in this short story is a mental reaction to Todd's experiences

and it is the mental reaction of its main character rather than the external experience, that is the heart of this short story.

B. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Based on the background of the study above it is interesting to analyse the development of Todd's dignity as a black young Air Force training pilot who make a single but fatal mistake and crashed in front of the white. The problems to be analysed in this study are formulated into these following questions:

- a. How is the development of Todd's dignity before he crashed with his aeroplane?
- b. How is the development of Todd's dignity when he is being driven out by the landowner after he crashed?

C. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This analysis is focused on the main character, Todd, in his experience when he tries to develop his own idea of dignity since he is a young black confronting the racist society. It is very important to know how is the development of Todd's dignity before and after the crash so we could gain them as a continuous process. And finally we could get an interesting explanation about what happened in Todd's dignity.

D. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Generally speaking, I hope this analysis will give a contribution to the world of knowledge generally and to the literary study particularly. From this analysis I hope we can catch a unique and tragic experience of someone who failed in his way to reach his ideal in front of his enemy. This analysis will broaden our horizons to the condition happen in America where the racial discrimination happened related with psychological condition of the Black as minority in the perspective of an American Black writer.

E. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

In this study, the analysis concentrates on the main character of the short story, Todd, about the development of his dignity before and after he crashed with his aeroplane. This analysis is not only focused on the character itself but also the social setting of the short story emphasising on the social context of the main character such as his family and relatives and the people surrounding him. It is aimed to get a description about the relationship of the main character with other character in this short story especially how he interacts with them and how the interactions influence him in developing his dignity.

This analysis is also supported by psychological approach so that it will describe the mental state of the main character in this short story. In this story, psychological approach will develop some understanding concerning the changes that might happened in the mental state of the main character and analyse them as a continuous and inseparable process.

F. THEORITICAL BACKGROUND

This study is concentrating on the analysis of the intrinsic elements of the short story, that are the character of Todd as the main character in “Flying Home” and the social setting which emphasising on the social context of the main character. Therefore, the intrinsic approach is applied to the analysis.

It is appropriate then to support the analysis by the using psychological and sociological approaches. The psychological approach is used to give a better understanding of the complexity in the development of Todd’s dignity personally. Therefore, it can be understood easier through this approach by applying Alfred Adler’s theory. The sociological approach is used to help in making a brief description of the relationships of the main character with other characters in his society and also its influences on the main character development of his dignity. The theories of personality development from Charles Horton Cooley and Paul B. Horton are then applied to the analysis.

G. METHOD OF STUDY

To analyse the problems I have stated above, the library research that is a process of finding information which are important to help directing the research is needed. The data and information are collected from various books, encyclopaedias, articles and any kinds of materials related to Ralph Ellison’s

Flying Home and the conditions of Black in America sociologically and psychologically.

The method used in the analysis is descriptive analysis method that is the descriptive explanation of the problems through characters' dialogues, events and actions. This method is based on the short story itself and also supported by other related information.

H. DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS.

There are several terms that often appear in this analysis and they are:

Dignity: honourable quality, self-respect, and worthiness

Development of dignity: the development of the concept of dignity itself happened in someone's.