



# Revisiting the Past: Representation of Human Rights Violations in Namaku Alam's Novel

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## ABSTRACT

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This literary research delves into the forms of human rights violations in the novel *Namaku Alam*, specifically employing the theoretical framework of new historicism. New historicism, which emphasizes the interplay between historical context and literary texts, provides a rich lens through which to analyze the representation of human rights issues in Indonesian literature. This study reveals how the novel *Namaku Alam* reflect and critique societal norms and political structures that perpetuate human rights violations. The research identifies several key themes that resonate with the principles of human rights, including discrimination, inequality, and the struggle for justice. Through a close reading of the texts, it becomes evident that this novel not only depict the violations of human rights but also serve as powerful tools for raising awareness about that issues. New historicism allows for a nuanced understanding of how literary works are embedded within their historical contexts. This approach reveals how the author draw upon historical events, cultural traditions, and contemporary political debates to create narratives that are both deeply personal and profoundly political. The findings of this research underscore the significance of literature as a medium for addressing human rights issues. By engaging with the theoretical framework of new historicism, this study highlights the critical role that literary works can play in shaping public discourse and influencing societal attitudes towards human rights. Ultimately, this research argues that literature can serve as a powerful tool for promoting empathy, understanding, and social change, thereby contributing to a more just and equitable society.

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## 1. Introduction

Human rights violations have long been a pervasive issue in Indonesia, and their impact is not limited to the realm of real-world events. Indonesian literature, particularly novels, has also served as a powerful medium for addressing and critiquing these violations. Through the lens of fiction, authors have been able to delve into the complexities and nuances of human rights abuses, often shedding light on the darker aspects of Indonesian society.

Novels such as those by Pramoedya Ananta Toer have been instrumental in highlighting the struggles of marginalized communities and the injustices they face. Works like "The Buru Quartet" series, which explores the experiences of prisoners under the Suharto regime, offer a poignant portrayal of the human cost of authoritarian rule (Gunawan, 2017; Wiyatmi, 2015). These narratives not only document historical events but also serve as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of oppression (Farhana & Aflahah, 2019; Marzuqi, 2016; Wicaksono, 2018). By examining

these literary representations, we can gain a deeper understanding of the cultural and societal dynamics that underpin human rights violations in Indonesia.

The unique capacity of literature to represent the human experience in a profound manner enables it to offer insights into the emotional and psychological impacts of oppression. By employing characters, narratives, and symbolism, authors can illustrate the intricacies of marginalized perspectives, illuminating the challenges, resilience, and internal conflicts that accompany systemic injustice. This enables readers to empathize with experiences that are geographically, temporally, and culturally distant from their own, thereby facilitating a more profound comprehension of the subtleties of power relations, identity formation, and survival strategies (Salam, 2008, 2020). Furthermore, literature provides a means of resistance, whereby writers can challenge dominant ideologies, reclaim agency, and offer alternative visions of society. This often involves giving voice to those who have been silenced by historical forces.

The representation of various forms of human rights violations in literary works plays an instrumental role in elucidating the underlying narratives that inform readers' perspectives on these issues. By presenting narratives that reflect the experiences of suffering, injustice, and oppression, literature can foster readers' empathy for victims of human rights violations. In addition to their intrinsic value, literary works serve as a conduit for disseminating information regarding the significance of upholding fundamental human rights. They also prompt readers to contemplate potential actions that can be taken to advance social and humanitarian justice.

Moreover, literature often acts as a historical record, preserving the voices of those who have suffered from human rights violations. Through storytelling, authors can bring to light the experiences of marginalized individuals and communities, allowing their stories to resonate with readers across time and space. This preservation of personal narratives is essential for recognizing past injustices and ensuring that they are not forgotten. By engaging with these literary representations, researchers can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of history, highlighting the intersection between literature and social justice movements (Salam, 2016).

Studying human rights violations in literary works can inspire action and advocacy. Literature has the power to provoke thought, challenge norms, and mobilize individuals toward social change. By examining the ways in which authors address issues such as discrimination, violence, and inequality, researchers can identify patterns and themes that resonate with contemporary struggles for human rights. This research not only enriches literary scholarship but also serves as a catalyst for dialogue and activism, encouraging readers to reflect on their own roles in combating injustice within their communities.

The *Namaku Alam* novel was written by Leila S. Chudori who works as a journalist. This novel was published in 2023 by KPG Publisher. This novel is a sequel to the novel *Pulang* written by Leila S. Chudori in 2012. The *Namaku Alam* novel tells about the lives of children and families of PKI political prisoners during the New Order era. During their lives they had to accept various discriminatory treatments from their surroundings just because they were the children of a political prisoner. Without them knowing what mistakes their father had made to get the title of political prisoner. The purpose of this study is to analyze the forms of human rights violations described by Leila S. Chudori in the novel *Namaku Alam* using the New historicism theory by Greenblatt (1980).

The exploration of human rights violations in literature can be effectively analyzed through the lens of New Historicism, a critical theory that emphasizes the interconnectedness of literary works with their historical and cultural contexts (Artika, 2015; Hickling, 2018). This approach allows researchers to examine how specific events and societal norms influence narratives, particularly those depicting human rights abuses. By integrating non-literary texts and historical documents, New Historicism provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the complexities of human rights violations as portrayed in various novels (Greenblatt, 1980).

The research examining human rights violations in literary works has attracted significant attention from literary researchers, including: Ningsih (2020); Lestari (2021); Purba et al. (2022); Azizah et al. (2022); Sulistyو & Lestari (2023); and Putri & Sukmawan (2024). A review of the literature revealed that while various theories were employed in the six studies identified, the new historicism theory was not utilized. A single study employed a material object in the form of a novel by Leila S. Chudori,

namely the study conducted by Lestari (2021). However, this study did not examine the novel *Namaku Alam*, but rather Leila S. Chudori's work entitled *Laut Bercerita*. A review of the literature reveals a single study that employs the New Historicism theory to examine the novel *Namaku Alam*. This study was conducted by Apriyani & Daulay (2023). However, this study does not address the issue of human rights violations. The study examines the reflection of the history of the New Order in the novel *Namaku Alam*. This demonstrates that no research has been identified which employs the new historicism approach to examine human rights violations in the novel *Namaku Alam*.

In applying New Historicism to a novel that addresses human rights violations, one can investigate how the text reflects and critiques historical realities. New Historicism encourages a critical examination of power dynamics within the narrative (Greenblatt, 1980). It posits that literature is not merely a reflection of reality but also a participant in shaping historical discourse. By analyzing how authors depict human rights violations, we can uncover underlying ideologies and challenge dominant narratives.

Researching human rights violations through New Historicism fosters a deeper understanding of the implications these narratives hold for contemporary society. By contextualizing literature within its historical framework, scholars can draw parallels between past injustices and current human rights issues. This approach not only enriches literary analysis but also serves as a reminder of the importance of remembering history to prevent the recurrence of similar violations in the future. Ultimately, New Historicism provides valuable insights into how literature can illuminate the ongoing struggles for human rights and justice across different contexts.

## 2. Method

This research is a type of qualitative descriptive research in the form of content analysis that uses archaeological methods in analyzing data. The first step in this archaeological method is to identify and collect parts of historical texts that are relevant to Leila S. Chudori's *Namaku Alam*'s novel Chudori (2023). The texts in this study are in the form of historical reference books, newspapers, and scientific journal articles, both national and international. The purpose of collecting these texts is to create a complex context so that it can provide in-depth insight into the socio-political and cultural conditions at the time the historical event occurred. The next stage is to conduct a critical analysis of literary texts by considering the historical context that has been collected. Researchers use this method to read literary texts intertextually, namely by looking for relationships with existing historical texts. In this step, researchers do not only focus on the content of literary texts, but also on a wider network of meanings, which are formed through interaction with other texts. The last stage is to compile a coherent historical narrative based on the findings of the analysis. The use of this archaeological method is expected not only to help in understanding literary texts more deeply, but also to provide insight into the broader dynamics of history and culture when the text was produced or read.

## 3. Result and Discussion

The New Historicism approach reveals the relationship between historical events and power structures reflected in the novel *Namaku Alam*. It shows how the narrative reflects the social reality of its era and how dominant ideologies distort and normalize human rights violations. It is a fact that literary texts are not the result of individual imagination alone. They are also the product of interaction with the social, political, and cultural realities of the time. In *Namaku Alam*, the dominance of certain ideologies—political views, morality, or social values held by dominant groups, for example—is reflected in the way the author portrays society, characters, and conflicts. This approach also reveals how dominant ideologies distort social reality, especially in relation to human rights violations. The narrative in the novel normalizes injustices and inequalities that occur in society. Take, for instance, the way repressive policies or oppression against certain groups may be subtly portrayed or even considered natural in the narrative. This can lead the public, including readers, to question the legitimacy of such actions.

### 3.1. Authoritarian measures of the New Order regime

The New Order regime's policy of eradicating communism in Indonesia led to severe repercussions for individuals suspected of involvement with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) or the events

surrounding the G 30 S tragedy. After the failed coup of September 30, 1965, which was attributed to leftist elements, the military under General Suharto launched a widespread anti-communist purge. This campaign involved mass arrests and detentions of individuals without due process of law, effectively bypassing legal norms. The regime's actions were fueled by a narrative that portrayed the PKI as a significant threat to national security, leading to public support for violent measures against suspected communists and their sympathizers. It is estimated that between 500,000 and one million people were killed or imprisoned during this period, marking one of the most brutal episodes in Indonesian history (Kasdi, 2012; Ricklefs, 2005; Roosa, 2008).

“Itulah pertama kali aku mendengar lebih jauh tentang Bapak; tentang suatu malam yang misterius, yang membingungkan pada 30 September 1965, ketika enam orang jenderal dan seorang perwira dibunuh dan dibawa ke Lubang Buaya oleh sekelompok orang, dan hanya dalam beberapa jam Partai Komunis Indonesia dianggap bertanggung jawab atas peristiwa tersebut (Chudori, 2023, p. 45).”

The consequences of these policies went beyond the immediate violence; they established a culture of fear and repression that permeated Indonesian society for decades. The regime's reliance on propaganda portrayed the PKI as a conspiratorial force plotting against the state, justifying extreme measures against anyone perceived to be associated with leftist ideologies. This systematic approach targeted not only active members of the PKI, but also a wide range of individuals, including labor organizers, feminists, and intellectuals who were perceived as threats to the stability of the New Order (Ahmad, 2013; Setyagama, 2015). As a result, survivors faced lifelong stigma and discrimination, and many former political prisoners were marked and barred from public service. This legacy of repression has had a lasting impact on Indonesia's political landscape, influencing contemporary attitudes toward communism and dissent in society. The results section is written following the chronological order as presented in the method section.

“Ini mimpi buruk para keluarga tapol. Kami semua sudah mendapatkan hantu Penelitian Khusus (mereka meringkasnya dengan istilah "Litsus") yang mengatur penyaringan dan pembersihan aparatur negara. Tetapi sekarang Litsus tampaknya semakin menyebar ke masyarakat, bahkan ke anak-anak sekolah. Kawan Om Aji mengatakan, aturan itu sementara disebut Bersih Diri dan Bersih Lingkungan (Chudori, 2023, p. 228).”

The quote represents a form of human rights violation resulting from discriminatory and repressive actions directed towards specific individuals on the basis of their political background or affiliation. The "Litsus" (Special Research) program and the "Clean Self and Clean Environment" policy, as described in the aforementioned quote, reflect the state's efforts to filter and eliminate individuals who are considered "unclean" from the government or wider society (Roosa, 2008, 2016). Such actions constitute a violation of the fundamental right of every individual to be free from discrimination on the basis of their beliefs or political views (K. Y. S. Wahyuni, 2022). Furthermore, they contravene the right to participate in community life without impediment. This repressive approach engenders social and political trauma for the victims and their families, who live in fear of unfounded investigations. Furthermore, the extension of this discriminatory policy to the school environment demonstrates a violation of children's rights to receive an education in an environment free from intimidation and political repression. Children are victims of policies that not only target adults but also haunt the younger generation, thereby forming a sense of fear and uncertainty that impacts their mental and psychological development. The rights of children to be protected from discrimination and to receive a decent education in a safe and inclusive environment have been violated. Schools, which should be places of learning, have instead become sites of political surveillance, creating an environment that is disturbing and unsafe for students (Manan & Harijanti, 2016).

“Di negara yang masih saja menyiksa anak-cucu Tragedi 65, mereka selalu lebih menyorot dan menanti-nanti agar kita berbuat kesalahan. Sedikit saja kamu lalai, kamu akan selesai. Dan yang merasakan akibatnya bukan kamu sendiri, tapi seluruh keluarga. (Chudori, 2023, p. 149).”

The above quote illustrates the transgenerational transmission of fear and injustice, whereby the children and grandchildren of victims are subjected to disproportionate pressure and surveillance from the state and society. Such individuals are under constant threat that a minor misstep could have significant ramifications, not only for themselves but also for their entire family. This represents a form of systematic psychological intimidation, which constitutes a violation of the right to freedom from cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the context of human rights, this kind of intimidation perpetuates social and collective

trauma, which should be addressed through efforts to reconcile and restore the dignity of the victims and their descendants.

The Indonesian government under President Soeharto (1966-1998) imposed severe restrictions on freedom of expression and opinion (Abdullah & Lopian, 2012). During this period, the New Order government imposed stringent controls on various forms of expression, including the media, art, literature, and other modes of communication that were perceived to pose a threat to the regime's stability (Djamhari, 2012). The government employed censorship, bans, arrests, and detentions of journalists, writers, artists, activists, and opposition figures to silence criticism of the government and sensitive issues such as corruption, human rights violations, and social injustice. A considerable number of media outlets and publications were prohibited or shut down on the grounds that they were disseminating perspectives that were deemed to be in opposition to the prevailing governmental stance. Laws and policies, such as the Press Publishing Business License (SIUPP), were employed to regulate the dissemination of information. Moreover, security agencies, including the military and intelligence services, actively suppressed critical social movements, thereby creating an atmosphere of fear that limited the freedom of individuals to express their opinions openly (Abdullah & Lopian, 2012; Eddyono, 2021; Ricklefs, 2005).

“Pada bulan Mei tahun ini, Kejaksaan Agung mengumumkan pelarangan novel Bumi Manusia dan Anak Semua Bangsa dengan alasan 'mempropagandakan ajaran-ajaran Marxisme-Leninisme' dan komunisme. (Chudori, 2023, p. 306).”

The following quote serves to illustrate a form of human rights violation, particularly in the context of freedom of expression and opinion. The prohibition of the novels *Bumi Manusia* and *Anak Semua Bangsa* by the Attorney General's Office on the grounds of promoting the ideology of Marxism-Leninism and communism represents an act that restricts the fundamental rights of every individual to access, disseminate, and discuss literary works (Kartikasari & Andayani, 2014; Tim Peneliti PR2Media, 2010; Yusuf, 2010). The right to freedom of expression is one of the fundamental rights enshrined in various international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (Sinombor, 2022; Sitorus et al., 2024). In this instance, the prohibition without a transparent and fair legal process can be regarded as an attempt to stifle the voices of those perceived as critical or divergent, thereby impeding the acquisition of diverse perspectives by society at large.

Furthermore, this action has the potential to violate the right to freedom of thought and belief. The banned novels possess historical and social contexts that are crucial for the nation's educational and cultural development. Furthermore, the banning of literary works for ideological reasons can be regarded as a form of censorship that infringes upon the individual's right to access information that is beneficial for understanding their own history and culture (Iqbal, 2019; Kartikasari & Andayani, 2014; Wahyuni & Banda, 2020). A country that claims to be democratic must guarantee the space for intellectual debate and freedom of choice in relation to views, rather than limiting or restraining discourse that is considered dangerous without a clear basis. In conclusion, the prohibition can be regarded as an instance of state intervention that curtails the fundamental rights to freedom of thought and expression.

### **3.2. Defiance Against Oppression: The Struggle of Political Prisoners and Their Descendants**

In this The resistance of marginalized groups to the New Order regime in Indonesia, particularly in relation to human rights violations, can be critically examined through a new historicist approach. This regime, which came to power after a military coup in 1965, was notorious for its systematic repression and brutal human rights violations, including mass killings, torture, and enforced disappearances. These violations were not only a means of maintaining political control, but also served to silence dissent and erase the identities of those deemed undesirable, such as leftists and ethnic minorities. By employing a new historicist lens, we can analyze how these historical injustices are reflected in literary works produced during this period, revealing the complex interplay between literature, culture, and socio-political realities.

The New Order regime has been successful in propagating the notion that communism is a highly dangerous ideology and that the PKI is a proscribed organization that must be eradicated to its roots. The PKI is regarded as an adversary of the state that precipitated a violent catastrophe that caused significant psychological distress to numerous individuals. The success of the New Order in



eradicating the PKI was not solely the result of political maneuvering; it was also the consequence of a cultural campaign to combat communism. Similarly, the success of the New Order regime in providing justification or legitimacy for the violence experienced by exiles and political prisoners and their families was achieved through a similar strategy.

Political prisoners and exiles were portrayed as individuals who did not receive full human rights and were subjected to discriminatory treatment by the social environment. The resistance of political prisoners and their descendants to these discriminatory actions manifests in two primary ways. Firstly, they change or discard their family names in order to appear as though they have no connection to former political prisoners. Secondly, they alter their parents' information data in a similar manner.

“Tante Retno memandang Ibu. “Ini teknik yang digunakan beberapa kawan yang dulu di penjara di Plantungan: menggunakan nama samaran atau nama sanak keluarga agar anak-anaknya bisa sekolah dengan aman,” katanya. “Jadi, jika mbak Surti tak keberatan, menurut saya, jalan keluarnya gunakanlah nama kami sebagai orang tua Alam.” (Chudori, 2023, p. 230).”

The excerpt of dialogue illustrates the challenges and difficulties encountered by families residing under an authoritarian regime. Aunt Retno discloses that the practice of utilizing pseudonyms or family members' names is a strategy employed by those who have endured oppression, particularly in Plantungan prison, to safeguard their children. This technique represents a form of passive resistance to threats that could impede children's access to education. By proposing this solution to Mbak Surti, Aunt Retno demonstrates familial solidarity and the significance of safeguarding the well-being of the younger generation in the face of indirect threats from the political system. Conversely, Aunt Retno's proposal also exemplifies a sense of collective responsibility and social cohesion within a society facing political pressure. In this context, the use of pseudonyms or other people's names represents a form of identity protection, serving to safeguard fundamental rights such as the right to education. The suggestion that Mbak Surti utilize Aunt Retno's name as Alam's parents illustrates how collective action and support from those in one's immediate vicinity can serve as a means of navigating and overcoming the structural injustices experienced by individuals and their families.

The form of resistance displayed by the character of Alam against discriminatory actions perpetrated by the social environment is manifested in the rewriting of the history of G 30 S. The assertion that "history is controlled by the rulers of its time," as repeatedly posited by the author (Chudori, 2023, p. 12), exemplifies the notion that historical narratives are crafted and maintained by the New Order rulers. In this instance, history becomes highly subjective and shaped by the political interests or ideology of the ruling class. Furthermore, the rulers possess the capacity to filter, erase, or obfuscate specific historical events, such as the G30S Tragedy. In *Namaku Alam*, the author articulates her perspective that the New Order regime consistently sought to monopolize historical discourse, offering a singular account of the G30S tragedy to the general public (Chudori, 2023, p. 12). The historical record of the G 30 S Tragedy during the New Order era remains opaque (Chudori, 2023, p. 252). As Roosa (2008) notes, numerous historians contend that the G 30 S tragedy remains shrouded in mystery. As Ricklefs (2005) notes, Indonesia was beset by political chaos in 1965, with numerous instances of suspicious activity. Cribb (2002) additionally asserted that the precise circumstances of the incident remain shrouded in uncertainty.

*Namaku Alam*'s novel challenges prevailing narratives shaped by authoritarian regimes. Such regimes seek to suppress opposition, obliterate accounts of victims, and portray their actions as necessary to preserve stability. The novel reintroduces previously silenced realities into the discourse. By using the story of the novel, we can hear the accounts of people who suffered human rights violations and were overlooked or misrepresented by the government. The novel challenges censorship and provides insight on injustice. The novel *Namaku Alam* reinstates the humanity of victims of human rights violations. In real life, victims are often seen as mere statistics. Fiction allows writers to convey the personal dimensions of suffering and foster empathy. This novel also illuminates the emotional and psychological dimensions of violence. It contributes to exposing human rights violations and reinforces efforts to recognize and advocate for the rights of victims.

#### 4. Conclusion

By utilizing the characters and narrative structure of *Namaku Alam*'s novel, the lived experiences of individuals who have been subjected to human rights violations and whose accounts have been

either ignored or distorted by the government can be elucidated and heard. The novel functions as a conduit for writers and readers to contest censorship and obtain a more sophisticated comprehension of the injustices that transpire. Moreover, this novel sheds light on the emotional and psychological aspects of violence that are not always discernible in formal reports or official documentation. Consequently, this text contributes to the exposure of the mechanisms of human rights violations that are often obscured, thereby reinforcing efforts to recognize, comprehend, and advocate for the rights of victims. By employing a new historicist framework, one can investigate how the *Namaku Alam* novel engages with historical events and portrays the lived experiences of individuals who have resisted oppression in various forms, including through activism, cultural expression, and simply surviving in a hostile environment. An examination of these issues within the context of literature not only enhances our comprehension of Indonesia's past but also highlights the necessity of remembering and addressing human rights violations in order to prevent their recurrence in the future.

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