

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents five sub chapters, including background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, significances of the study and scope and limitation of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Women's issues have always been an exciting topic since it is a global issue and still being discussed up to now. This study is women studies including three important points closely related to women's issues more specifically women as victims of sexist oppression. The three points are sexist oppression, solidarity and power. Those three points are required to evaluate the social status of the main female protagonist and her basic personal power in Radwa Ashour's novel entitled *The Woman from Tantoura*. In this study the sexist oppression experienced by the main female protagonist, the solidarity obtained by the main female protagonist, and basic personal power practiced by the main female protagonist are analysed. This study is conducted to identify how the main female protagonist changing the largest force of inequality. The main female protagonist, who practices basic personal power, demonstrates that she can resist the largest force of inequality namely sexist oppression, and thus proves that women are powerful. As a result, this study must elaborate on the main female protagonist that lives in inequality and injustice.

Women are often positioned in the minority in the social structure that emerges in society. Especially in a patriarchal society, this means that men always take precedence in all parts of life. In general, men hold the highest class/position in the social hierarchy and followed by women. As a result of their marginalized status, women have been subjected to oppression. Departing from the assumption

that women suffer oppression, feminism emerges in an attempt to stop such oppression. bell hooks, a black feminist proposes a new concept of feminism in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, she claims that feminism is not simply a fight for equality between women and men, but it is a movement to end sexist oppression (hooks, 1984).

Sexist oppression is a crisis condition experienced by women which invite feminists to fight against it. Sexist oppression is a form of oppression that is primarily directed at women (hooks, 1984). Then why should be women as the victims of the sexist oppression? It is because women are considered powerless and they are the silent majority. This situation happens because they live in patriarchy system. Patriarchy system can lead into sexism. It is a prejudice against women. Sexism has indirectly stereotyped or discriminated against individuals based on their gender since birth. Women experience form of sexism such as discrimination, exploitation, and oppression. Here women as the oppressed ones, so who are the oppressor? The oppressor might be men or women who dominate and control other women. The forms of sexist oppression can be domination system that leads other forms of oppression (hooks, 1984). These forms of oppression make women in difficult situation.

Moreover, that condition leads women to bond each other to share their resources. Women bonding based on sharing resources can strengthen solidarity. In addition to the feminist movement, women's solidarity is an influential in fighting sexism (hooks, 1984). Women, who share a similar fate, are more likely to understand each other. However, this does not imply that they deserve as the people who are oppressed. Nevertheless, the point to fight oppression is to share and develop women's resources. By sharing and developing this resources, women may have a strong bonding and solidarity. The solidarity may be obtained from men who are aware of the problematic situation experienced by women. Men, who are in unity front with women to end sexist oppression, are called comrades (hooks, 1984). Furthermore, the bonding gives positive impact to the arising of energy, action and effective interactions towards women.

The process of fighting sexism and changing the most significant forces of inequalities are also illustrated in the novel entitled *The Women from Tantoura* by Radwa Ashour. This novel depicts the tragic events in Palestine at the time. The novel that is published in 2014 is told from the perspective of a woman, Ruqayya. *The Woman from Tantoura* covers a succession of inequalities faced by the main character, Ruqayya. She is portrayed in this story as a 13-year-old kid who lives in a simple family. Ruqayya's life is turned upside down when Israel assaults her village. She and her family are subjected to many forms of oppression and even murder.

The novel by Radwa Ashour entitled *The Woman from Tantoura* is chosen as the data source in this study, because the novel entitled '*at-Thanthuriyyah*' in Arabic which is translated by Kay Heikkinen into English became one of the best novels by Radwa Ashour, an Egypt famous female writer. In addition, Radwa Ashour has received several awards for her works. In 2007, Ashour wins Constantine Cavafy Prize for Literature and in 2011, Ashour wins Owais Prize (Mlynxqualey, 2013). Apart from *The Woman from Tantoura* there are several Ashour's novels and short stories which translated into other languages such as Spanish, Italian, French and German. Therefore, the novel by Radwa Ashour entitled *The Woman from Tantoura* is very worthy to be analysed.

Based on the description above, the writer is interested in conducting a study entitled "Changing the Largest Force of Inequality by Ruqayya in Radwa Ashour's *The Woman from Tantoura*". Based on the title, the writer emphasizes the phrase "Changing the Largest Force of Inequality". Here the writer's intention is to change "the largest force of inequality" which is an act of sexist oppression into a power to stop sexist oppression. According to hooks ending sexist oppression is a strategic form and focus for the feminist movement (1984:34-35). It is based on the assertion that sexism or sexist oppression is the basis of other oppression. In this study, sexist oppression, solidarity and basic personal power are analysed because in these aspects, there is a strong connection between them. In this novel, the most significant force of inequality experienced by Ruqayya is

depicted with various forms of sexist oppression. Furthermore, due to the influence of solidarity and bonding, Ruqayya, the main character in this novel is finally liberated from the sexist oppression she has been subjected to, allowing Ruqayya to obtain power to stop sexist oppression and rise above the inequality.

Related with the illustration above, this novel is going to be analysed by using Feminism theory by perspective of Gloria Jean Watkins or as known as bell hooks. hooks decides not to use any capital letters in writing her name because she wants the public to only focus on her works (Blackett, 2021). Through the lens of bell hooks (1984), Ruqayya as the main character of the novel *The Woman from Tantoura* that transforms herself from margin to centre by changing the largest forces of inequality will be clarified in this study.

Previously, the theory of feminism by bell hooks is used by Suci Suryani (2018) to analyse different data source. The article she writes is entitled *The Sisterhood to The Women's Survival in Atiq Rahimi's The Patience Stone*. She uses a novel entitled *The Patience Stone* by Atiq Rahimi as a data source and focuses on analysing the Sisterhood between the main female protagonist and her aunt. The difference between the previous research and this study lies in the use of different data source and a different focus. In this study, the main focus of the writer is sexist oppression, solidarity and power.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study, there are three research questions that can be noticed, these are:

1. What kinds of sexist oppression does Ruqayya experience?
2. How is the solidarity built by Ruqayya from sharing resources?
3. How does Ruqayya struggle for stopping sexist oppression?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the research questions, the research objectives are:

1. To elaborate kinds of sexist oppression experienced by Ruqayya.
2. To elaborate how is the solidarity built by Ruqayya from sharing resources.
3. To elaborate how Ruqayya struggles for stopping sexist oppression.

1.4 Significances of the Study

This study has two aspects of significance; theoretical and practical aspect. Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the theoretical foundation of literary criticism, especially feminist literary criticism based on the perspective of hooks to understand feminist theory which has more than one theory. Practically, this research applies feminist literary criticism by considering the appropriate feminist theory, which is related to the text or to literary works. In addition, this study is expected to be useful for knowing how to analyse literary works using the hooks' perspective.

Furthermore, as a women study, the outcomes of this study are expected to contribute and enrich information for readers or other researchers interested in understanding and applying feminist literary criticism by hooks to literary works in the future.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

In defining the research scope, this study focuses on Ruqayya's character in Radwa Ashour's *The Woman from Tantoura*. The writer talks about sexist oppression experienced, solidarity built and power exercised by Ruqayya. Furthermore, this research is limited in answering the research problems which are the kinds of sexist oppression experienced by Ruqayya, solidarity that formed and her struggle to stop sexist oppression as included in Radwa Ashour's *The Woman from Tantoura*.