

# Representation of Women's Struggle in Indonesia Contemporary Novels: Liberal- Feminist Studies

Diana, Yasnur Asri, Yenni Hayati  
Padang State University  
[dianapdg12345@gmail.com](mailto:dianapdg12345@gmail.com)

**Abstract--***This study aimed to describe the form of the struggle of women in Indonesian contemporary novels. To describe the form of the struggle of women in Indonesian contemporary novels, the theory of liberal feminism was being used. This study used a qualitative method of content analysis techniques. Data validation was done by triangulation techniques, which checked the validity of data that take advantage of something else outside of the data. The data of this study were words, phrases, and sentences from the narrator or a character that describe the struggle of women. Source of research data were the text of the novels Para Priyayi by Omar Khayyam, Saman by Ayu Utami, Kitab Omong Kosong by Seno Gumira Adjidarma and Tarian Bumi by Oka Rusmini. Based on the result of the analysis found that the forms of struggle done by women in the contemporary novel are (1) the struggle to find the equal rights in education and politic, (2) the struggle to be free from patriarchal culture, namely do not regarding man as a strong and a superior man and man have no right to decide a choice.*

**Keywords--***representation, forms of struggle, patriarchy, liberal feminism*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Women have always been the object of interest to be discussed. About the women, both as individuals and as social beings, has become the subject of conversation that never subsided. Its charm has not only attracted the attention of men, but also women. Any conversation area covers almost all areas of life, such as legal, social, political, economic, arts, culture, and literature.

Since long time, position of women has always marginalized. The position of women under the domination of men. Women only serves as a wife (male escort) and mother (of the children). Its presence is practically only in the realm of domestic, is as a housewife. Male domination of women, eventually led the movement to reject everything that is marginalized, subordinated and controlled by the dominant culture. Movement was later known as the feminist movement (Ratna, 2010).

Mustikawati (2015) states that in Indonesia, the movement of the struggles of women begins to burst to the surface after a book titled *Door Tot Licht Duistern* is published in 1911. The book is a compilation of correspondence Kartini with Dutch friends (Abendanon, Stella, Ovink-Soer, etc.) It began to attract attention and discussion when Armijn Pane translates and titled *Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang* (2005). This book is considered an inspiration to women in Indonesia to fight for the dignity and status in order to align with the male. As a result, the word emancipation of women becomes very familiar and Kartini was renowned as one heroine Indonesian national pride.

In the history of Indonesia Literature, *Siti Nurbaya* romance (written by Marah Rusli in 1922) is the first novel that is able to open up the horizons of Indonesian literature regarding female world. In the next decade, *Layar Terkembang* (by Sutan Ali Syahbana, 1936) appeared, also the theme of women's emancipation. In subsequent years appear the works of a more open and complex discuss women's issues, such as *La Barka* (by NH Dini, 1975), *Burung-burung Manyar* (by Mangun Wijaya, 1981), and *Saman* (by Ayu Utami, 1998).

Turaeni (2010) states that the presence of women in literature is also an embodiment of the slogan "hidden" on a woman's self about the real circumstances of his involvement in the construction of a society. According to feminists, women constitute a class in a society oppressed by other classes, namely men.

Patriarchy is an ideology that considers man as controlling anything, and women as second-class in society. (Asri, 2014, p. 447; Wiyatmi, 2010, p. 202) in line with the (Andari, 2011, p.313), (Dwipayana, 2017, p. 39), states that the patriarchy is a system in the social structure and in practice males dominate, oppress and exploit women. Women are still considered to be the second class which is often referred to as "second class citizens" whose existence is not taken into consideration.

Representation is the first act of representing; 2 state represents; 3 what it represents; representatives (KKBI, 2008). Terminology representation has been known since the time of Aristotle and explained simply as the act of replacing something that cannot happen or was not able to be present by itself (Childers & Hentzi, 1995).

Sumardjo (1999) argues that the novel is a literary work that is the result of imaginative thinking of human invention. The novel as a work of fiction also offers a world, a world which contains models of life idealized, imaginary world that was built through the various elements of intrinsic such as events, plot, characters (and characterization), background, viewpoints, and others that everything is imaginary.

Understanding of the latest novel is simply a novel that lives in the present. Latest novel is regarded as an unconventional novel for straying of all fiction writing systems that exist for this. Latest novel appears a backdrop an overall shift in values and life issues.

### **Liberal feminism**

In the broadest sense, the feminist is movement of women to reject everything that is marginalized, subordinated and demeaned by the dominant culture, both in politics and economics as well as social life in general (Ratna, 2010).

The roots of this theory are on the freedom and equality of rationality. Women are rational beings, the same ability as men, so it should be given the same rights as men (Tong, 2010). The problem lies in the product policy of gender-biased state. Therefore, in the 18th century, often demands were made that women receive the same education, in the 19th century, many efforts to fight for the opportunity for civil rights and economics for women, and in the 20th century women's organizations were formed to oppose sexual discrimination in the political, social, economic, and personal. In the Indonesian context, legal reform perspective justice through the urging of a 30% quota for women in parliament is the contribution of the liberal feminist experience.

Feminism liberal wants freedom for women from oppression, patriarchy, and gender.

### **Relevant research**

By focusing on the picture of a female character that deconstructs the ideology of patriarchy, a study entitled "Feminism and deconstruction of the ideology Familialisme in Novel Saman by Ayu Utami," (Wiyatmi 2003, p. 155) shows that women figures in Saman are a representation of the female figure who showed symptoms of denial of the ideology feminism in culture patriarchal society in Indonesian society.

Asri (2014, p. 446-457) suggests that the three forms of resistance carried out by the female character towards patriarchal ideology, namely (1) a radical rejection, (2) the rejection compromised, and (3) denial of the cultural, political, economic, and social. Furthermore, Asri (2014, p. 190-197) states that the struggle of women against gender inequality in the domestic sector occurred because of the tradition of seclusion (alienate the girl married). As a result, women are placed in domestic roles such as taking care of her husband and children, doing house chores (cooking, cleaning, and washing clothes). Second, the struggle of women against gender discrimination in the public sector is done in the form of struggle in the education and social discrimination, struggle subordinates in economy, human rights and community services in remote areas.

## **II. METHODS**

This study applied a qualitative method of content analysis techniques. Data validation was managed by triangulation techniques, which checks the validity of data that take advantage of something else outside of the data. The data of this study were words, phrases, and sentences from the narrator or a character that continues the struggle of women. Source of research data was the text of the novel: *Para Priyayi* by of Omar Khayyam, *Saman* by Ayu Utami, *Kitab Omong Kosong* by Seno Gumira Adjidarma, and *Tarian Bumi* by Oka Rusmini. Data analysis techniques were 1) a describing, 2) identifying, 3) interpreting, 4) concluding.

## **III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

Discussion of the results showed that the form of the struggle waged by women in the Indonesian novels edge are (1) the struggle for equal rights in education and politics, (2) The struggle to escape from a patriarchal culture, which does not consider man as a creature strong and superior, men no right to dictate a choice or a court case, and after marriage do not want to join the husband's family.

### 1. The struggle of women to gain equality

In accordance with Article 31 of the 1945 Constitution states that every citizen is entitled to an education. Men and women have equal opportunities to obtain an education. Soemini's struggle to get the right education can be seen in the novel *Para Priyayi* of Omar Khayyam. It can be seen in the following excerpt.

*"Consideration of me, ma'am, sir. I was not ready. If finished the HIS, I am going to be fifteen years old. Do not we include advanced gentry family followers mind AdjengRadenKartini who disagree too young married women. I still also want to increase their knowledge and want to feel the schools in the larger city of Wanagalih. Schools to Solo or somewhere."* (Khayyam, 2009, p. 86-87).

Soemini's struggle is an attempt to get the women's educational equality with men. Women should get an education as possible because she would be the mother of his children. Educated mother will produce children intelligent and civilized. This is in accordance with the opinion of Dr. Ben Hamel, a researcher from the Netherlands said that the intelligence of a child obtained from a mother. Dr. Ben Hamel said "The effect was so big because of the intelligence level of a person associated with the X chromosome from their mother". Therefore, a smart mom has great potential for bearing intelligent children.

*Satya in Novel Kitab Omong Kosong, Also strive to provide knowledge to everyone, no exception women. Satya want to rewrite it and redistribute it. He wants to simplify the discussion of the book, so that knowledge is not only owned by the seller of knowledge. It stands to science belong to everyone, and no one is entitled mastered it for himself alone, especially with the purpose of holding the reins of power over the world.* (Ajidarma, 2013, p. 344)

Satya decision to share knowledge to everyone implies that Satya is also fighting for women's education. He does not marginalize women, does not consider women as subordinate to men. It can also be said that Satya considered that women have equal rights with men in terms of education for acquiring knowledge. Knowledge is necessary for anyone to deal with the problems of living well and wisely.

In the provision of Article 27 paragraph (1) of the 1945 Indonesia Constitution stated that all citizens are equal before the law and government and shall abide by the law and the government without any exception. It explains that the absence of discrimination in law and government in Indonesia, including men and women, ethnic groups, religions, customs and race but the portion of every citizen in law and government is the same.

The struggle to put women in politics has revolutionized the way we think about politics. Politics is no longer defined as a way to master, but a way to empower. Relationships that have is not a relation of power, but rather cooperation or partnership. In that context there are shades of fairness and equality.

Novel *Tarian Bumi* by Oka Rusmini reveals the struggle of women to gain equality in politics. Jero Kenanga is a Sudra woman who has a big dream to be part of a Brahmin family.

*His mother was not a nobleman. Mrs. Lake is a Sudrawoman, women mostly edited by male Brahmin, men in blood flow values of nobility, grandeur, greatness, as well as arrogance* (Rusmini, 2017, p. 10).

The struggle of Telaga's mother to enter into a Brahmin family is a form of struggle for women who demand political equation. Telaga's mother who has Sudra caste lively feel oppressed, are not taken into account in public life. The Sudras will not be allowed to become a leader, it will not be rich, and are not allowed to worship in any temple. Telaga's mother bored into the Sudra. He wants to be the Brahmins. She's desire was achieved by way of luring male Brahmin and married men of the Brahmin. Her effort is succes. She eventually became a Brahmin family after marriage by Ida Bagus Ngurah Pidada. Telaga's mother initially named Luh Sekar, later became Jero Kenanga. Jero Kenanga has become a Brahmin.

### 2. The struggle of women to escape from the shackles of patriarchy

Patriarchy is a system that considers men destined to organize women. Walby (2014, p. 28) states that patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices to position the male as those who dominate oppress and exploit women. The use of the term social structure to indicate rejection of biological determinism and the idea that each man is in a dominant position and each women is in a subordinate position.

With the variety of feminism movement, which tried to undermine the patriarchal culture that women are not always marginalized, women should fight for equality and freedom itself. The struggle of women against pastures which assumes that the male is strong and superior creatures seen in the latest Indonesian novel-novel.

*Tarian bumi* is a novel which lifted the struggle of women to not make men as strong and superior beings. It was seen in the figure of Luh Kenten. Luh Kenten hates to see the life of Balinese man who did not want to strive for survival of life itself and its family

*"I will not marry, Meme. I do not want them lied. I hate all men talking about women in a way no respect! "*

*"They never honored women, Meme."*

*"No. Every day I see their activities. They drink coffee until noon, in the afternoon metajen, cockfights. At night they are free to rest accompanied by his wife. How happy all their lives! "*

*"Yes, Meme. I say this with sincerity. I'll prove it, we can live without men. I will prove this saying! "(Rusmini, 2017, p. 34)*

Luh Kenten is Bali's women who are disobedient to the rules of the culture. She did not want oppressed by patriarchal culture prevailing in the environment. Patriarchal culture always makes women as oppressed and marginalized. He did not want to honor the men as being superior. In order to believe them above decision, Luh Kenten choose not to live together with men. He was sure he could live without men.

Figure of Telaga describes by Oka as a woman who opposed the prevailing custom in Bali. Telagapun should receive customary law. He was eventually dumped by his family and is not considered anymore as a Brahmin woman to marry a man Sudra.

*"This day is also the pole will shed the name Ida Ayu. Shudra woman pole will be intact" (Rusmini, 2017, p. 173)*

The story of the struggle of Telaga and some other Balinese women in achieving happiness and confront socio-cultural reality around him that is appointed by Oka Rusmini in his novel. Feminism is the struggle of women in realizing equality of rights between men and women. Feminism also wants to fight against male domination regarded as superior beings.

Shakuntala is a character in the story of Saman that struggled to get out of patriarchal rule.

*When I was nine years old, I'm not a virgin. People do not mention this because my breasts have not grown (Utami, 2003, p. 124).*

*When my parents heard that I was going out with a giant in the forest, they are members of the second advice. Virginity is the offering of a woman to her husband. And you only have one, such as the nose. Therefore, do not ever give before marriage, because you will be glassware. But, the day before I was thrown into a strange city where I live now, I immediately make a decision. I'll leave my virginity on the beloved giant. (Utami, 2003, p. 124).*

Shakuntala decision to give her virginity to a giant is a form of rebellion over values or norms prevailing in a society that is not always given to the husband's virginity.

The tradition of highly extolled virginity in patriarchal society and has become an ideology. The tradition of virginity is an ideology that includes the interests of men and reflects the dominance of men over women. Hence the strong dominance, this ideology has been socialized and internalized from generation to generation, not only by men but also women themselves.

Shakuntala claimed virginity itself or handed over his own choice, in the belief that he is an independent man who was able to take the best decisions for them without diembel embroider must to be good women in accordance with the norms prevailing in society.

The decision to not live with a man taken by Luh Kembren, figure in the Dance of the Earth. He decided to live alone because it has a past that makes it reluctant to live together. Luh Dambren remembered his friend who is married to a German painter, who turns men only memanaatkannya alone. He made his wife's body as an object that can be enjoyed painting her naked by his friends. Luh Dambren tortured by her husband. And the man he loves, Jean Paupiere French man was having sex with her husband of Luh Dambren. Here is an excerpt:

*People told me that Luh Kambren is a Shudra woman who crotchety. In the past, a king ever proposed to her to be his concubine. Kambren rejected (Rusmini, 2017, p. 94).*

The traumatic experience of Luh Kembren makes himself hated men. Luh Kembren even refused a request for a king to make himself as concubines. Luh Kembren ended up hating men. The hatred that very nature that made him decides not to live together with men, although the proposal was from a king. Luh attitude Kambren is a struggle to show that he did not want in the grip of male power. The presence of men in her life makes himself a convict. Women have the right to make decisions for them without having mastered by men.

This is in line with the opinions Mananzan (et al., 1996) which states that patriarchal ideology is a social system that supports and let the predominance of men, causing the concentration of power and privelesedi the hands of men, and the resulting control and subordination of women, as well as creates inequality or gender inequity. This system puts the relationship of men and women are hierarchical, that is a position and a role where men are more dominant and more

decisive. Meanwhile, women are subordinate in some ways determined by men. In this context, women are placed as second-class beings or “the second sex”: inferior, subordinate, and marginalized.

Figures Sita in novel *Kitab Omong Kosong* is also described as a woman who finally decided to end the persecution by her husband Rama by way of leave and chose to live in hermit Valmiki in the jungle, even then dare to show the sanctity of himself by vowing to be accepted in the lap of Earth and muksa swallowed by the earth. It can be seen in the following excerpt.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the discussion about the representation forms of the struggle of women in Indonesian novels to date, then didapatlah two forms of the struggles of women, namely (1) the struggle for equal rights in education and politics, (2) The struggle to escape from the shackles of patriarchal culture, which is not considers men as strong and superior beings and men are not entitled to determine a choice or a matter.

This study is a small part of the study of feminism in literature. There is still much that can be extracted to an embodiment equal rights and justice for women. To that end, researchers are expected to develop studies to other forms.

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