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**FEMINISM IN *KAKAWIN NĪTISĀSTRA***

**(A Deconstructive Literary Approach)**

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**Abstract**

*Kakawin NĪtisāstra* is a type of non-narative old Javanese poetry. It contains moral teaching and governing politics. One of the teachings is the ethic of students in learning which is necessary to be adopted. The ethic states that during learning period students are not allowed to get married. The way of the implementation of the ethic is through disgracing women, so it as negative meaning.

The theory applied in analyzing the vision of *NĪtisāstra* towards women is the theory of literary deconstruction. Literary deconstruction states that there is an implicit meaning within the existence of meaning in a piece of literary work. In order to reveal the implicit meaning, the literary work needs to be open into its parts and then deconstructed.

*NĪtisāstra* reveals that women has their own weaknesses such: stupid, the way of their thinking is hard to be followed by men, dishonest, the cause of all misery, and even it can be as the cause of a war or a world destruction. So it gives negative judgement.

*Nītisāstra*'s judgment as stated above signals there is an implicit meaning in it. It is the meaning of "fear and obedient" with the existence of women.

## **FEMINISM IN KAKAWIN NĪTISĀSTRA**

### **(A Deconstructive Literary Approach)**

#### **1. Introduction**

*Nītisāstra* is one of old Javanese poem or *kakawin* which is different from other types of *kakawin* in general. The differences can be seen in the form of presentation of the text within it. *Nītisāstra kakawin*, if it is viewed from the presentation of the text, it is belong to non-narrative literary work. It means that, it does not contain element of narration. In general *kakawin* is a narrative literary work, and it contains "narration/story", series of events, characters and it marks by stages of time (Zaimar et.al, 2011:47), on the other hand, these elements are not exist in *Kakawin Nītisāstra*.

*Kakawin Nītisāstra* if it is viewed from its form of narration is a descriptive *kakawin*. Descriptive means there is a representation or pictures of something from the writer. Besides, the dialogues are in the form of monologue; it means *kakawin* does not contain elements of dialogues in it. The *kakawin* which have the same form of presentation with *Kakawin Nītisāstra* are: *Kakawin Nirārtha Prakṛêta*, *Kakawin Pṛalambang Bhāsa Wêwatêkan*, *Kakawin Atlas Bhumi*, and *Kakawin Sabhalangö*.

*Kakawin Nītisāstra* comprises of 15 metrics and 120 stanzas. All of the stanzas are presented in old Javanese. It contains the moral teaching and ethic, governing systems, communication, philosophy of life, which basically are given to the students as younger generartion, future leaders, and future priests or to those who believe in *sukla brahmacari* (a belief which forhibitting students married during learning period). A part from these, the stanzas also encompass views on women. This study describes the views of *Nītisāstra* on women (feminism).

Etymologically *Nītisāstra* derives from Sanskrit words; they are the words *nīti* and *sāstra*. The word *nīti* derives from the first class of Sanskrit verb *nī* which has the meaning "to lead"; to bring; to get married; to ensure; to decide; to trace; to instruct; to teach; and to train. Then it turns to the form *nīti* which means: supervision, to conduct; to gain, supporters, support, policy, wise, and ethic (Surada, 2007; 190).

Mardiwarsita (1981:375) states the meaning of the word *nīti* are: `behaviour`, `life guide line`, `manner`, `tactics`, `politics`, `science of politic`, `wise`, `supervision`, `skill`, `expertise`, `cautious`, `concern`, and `alert`. In old Javanese language *nīti* means: the way to work/conducting the right and good things; good behaviour/being sincere and wise; political science, political policy, world liness policy, tactic or strategy which has been considered carefully (Zoutmulder, 2006:707)

The word *śāstra*, in Sanskrit or in old Javanese means: `religion`, `truth`, `science`, `story`, `script` and `philosophy`. *Nitiśāstra* is in the form compound words with its meaning `science on political ethic; science guidelines`; religious guidelines`, religious philosophical guidelines` or `governing political guidelines` (Zoutmulder, 2006; 708). *Nitiśāstra* in this study means knowledge of morality guidelines/ethic and politics.

## 2. General Overview on Feminism and Deconstruction

### 2.1 Feminism, Feminis and Feminin

*Feminism* is a new concept on women movement in literary theory (post modern). In the year 1960<sup>th</sup> was not the beginning of the emergence of the theory of feminism in literature it can be assumed new; because there was a new movement on tradition of the way of thinking of women which were related to literature. It indicates that the modernity on the way of thinking and the old movement which owned their own classical books, that diagnose the problems of inequality of women in the society as it was being proposed (Barry, 2010:141). Furthermore it was said that the women movement during the 1960<sup>th</sup> as the cause of the emergence of feminism literary criticism of the present day. Women realize the significance of the women image which was being brought into wide spread of fame in literature, they view that it is very important for them to struggle and question its authority and coherence. In the 1970<sup>th</sup> feminism critics was aim at the effort to analyse on patriarchy mechanism. It means there is a way of thinking of men and women culturally which is constantly viewed the inequality of sexes. Certainly, it has been more emphasized on the view of the male writers who state women as objects. They construct women images which influences their works, this conditioned can be assumed that women `ready to fight` and in a polemic (Barry, 2010;143).

The above description stated on the 1980<sup>th</sup> era the feminism critique was more dynamics. The feminism critics it turned out to be more ecletics from the previous era. Their intention were focused more on the attacking men relate to thier world which become the investigation, and the point of view of women. On the other hand, it is also reconstructed writings on women who were under oppression /being disgraced or even vanish. The focus of intention was also shifted on the needs of reconstructing the importance of women writing by rewriting them, so the disappearance of the women role former time, it was being

emphasized and given priority. The existence of change of focus means there was changes from *androteks*(males literary works) to *ginoteks*(female literary works).

Feminism can be assumed as 'political position', while feminism means female biologically. Feminism means women's concept or 'a school in a literary world'. This paper, a part from pro and contradict towards the theory of feminism, describes the deconstruction of women which were being discussed in the *Kakawin Nītiśāstra*. Redescribing the implicit meaning on women (feminine) which were describe in the stanzas of the *kakawin*.

## 2.2 Deconstruction

The word deconstruction relates to Jacques Derrida in his book *De Lagrammatologie*, I and II. He was born on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July 1930 from a Jewish family EL Biar, Aljazair (Fayadi, 2005:252). His article was published on *Critiquemagazine* which were published in 1965 and 1966 (Kaelan, 2009:252).

Deconstruction is a name given to the critique when the opposition was being weaken partly or it can be shown that some of them weakening each other in their textual meaning (Eagleton, 2010:191, Piliang, 2010:125). Deconstruction is a method of analysis which was developed by Derrida by opening the language codes, particularly the opposition of the pair, so it can create an endlessly play of sign and without final meaning (Piliang, 2010:16).

Hoed (2003:153) states that: The theory of deconstruction proposed by Derrida exists as a critique to the theory of sign proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure. Sign is seen as the relation between *signifiant* and *signifie*. The meaning of a sign is based on semiology's differences. In reality the relation between *signifiant* and *signifie* is dynamic. It means this relation is often is not reveal yet and given new meaning. The argumentation strengthen it, that in French language the word *differer* is not only has the meaning 'difference' but it also has the meaning 'to postpone'. Further it was said that the relation between 'signifiant' and 'signifie' or between form and meaning is dynamic. The meaning does not gain only through differences but it also can be achieved through semiology postpone. That is the reason he proposed new term *différance*, (the letter *a* is replaced by *e*). Deconstructive theory is applied to find out their unreveal meaning on women in *Nītiśāstra Kakawin*

## 3. Feminin in *Kakawin Nītiśāstra*

It has been discussed in the introduction of this writing, that *Nītiśāstra Kakawin* is a type of non-narrative *kakawin*. The other forms of non-narrative *kakawin* are *Nirārtha*

*Prakrēta*, and *Prēlambang Bhāsa Wēwatēkan*. Recently emerges a new non-narative *kakawini*. e: *Kakawin Sabha Langö* and *Kakawin Atlas Bhūmi*

*Wirama* (type of metric/ poetic metre) used in *Nītiśāstrakakawin* are 15 poetic metres. The total stanzas are 120 in the *kakawinNītiśāstra*. The first *Wirama* is *wiramaSaraddulaWikridhita*. Then followed by other *wirama*: *WangsaPatraPatita*, *Padma Kesara*, *Raga Kusuma*, *Seronca* or *Kusuma Wicitra*, *AswaLalita*, *Bhramara Wilasita*, *Raga Kusuma*, *Smara Dahana*, *Prawira Lalita*, *Sardhula Wikridhita*, *Smara Dahana*, *Sardhula Wikridhita*, *Kusuma Wicitra*, and *Wasanta Tilaka*.

The gist of the *Nītiśāstra Kakawin* is in accordance with its title which is related to the description of way of life, piety or ethics, political ethics. The introduction in the first stanza covers *manggala* or introduction. The content of the text in the *manggala* tribute to the Goddess of patronage, *DewaWisnu*. *DewaWisnu* is in the shape of Great Spirit resides in each human. He inspired the writer so that the writer was able to complete the *Nītiśāstra Kakawin*. The second stanza up to the last stanza contain ethic or moral teaching.

The stanzas reveal about women are interesting. These stanzas are in the 4<sup>th</sup> *wirama Raga Kusuma* on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> (or the 53<sup>rd</sup>, 55<sup>th</sup>, 56<sup>th</sup> from all the stanzas) the details are in the following quotations.

#### *Wirama Raga Kusuma*

*Ring stri sangka nikang wirodha ring asit krēta yuga sira Dewi Renukâ  
Ring trêtâtisayeng prang âdbhuta nimittaning alaga ta Dewi Janâki  
Ngunî dwâpara bharatâyudha sirang Drupada parama putri kângdanî  
Sakwehning waniteng yugânta kaharêpnia maka karananing prang âdbhuta (NS  
4,15)*

The translation

Since early time, women caused all the troubles.

During the *Kreta Yuga* period Dewi Renuka who caused the destruction of the world.

During the period of *Treta Yuga*, there was a great war caused by Dewi Sita.

During the period of *Dwapara Yuga* there was a war among Bharata descendants, which caused by the beautiful daughter of King Drupada.

During the period of *Kali Yuga* (doomsday) all women had caused the great war .

*Lwirning tan rêju ring jaga twi ganitanya tan abênêr ulahnya kawruhi,  
Strî wad wad kalawan lwahârêju wilut lakunika pada tan wênang tutên,  
Yan wantên kumudâcukul šaka rikang watu mabênêr ulahning anggana,  
Sangsiptanya wuwusku yatna sira sang sujana siniwi ring wadhujana (NS.4,16).*

The translation

There are three items which are not straight in this word, and the unworthy behaviour should be known. A female, root (of a tree) and the flow of the river which has windy ways, all should not be imitated. If there is a lotus grows on the stone it is straight (right) it is a sign of a good behaviour of a female. The conclusion of my advice refers to those wise men should be careful when being served by women.

*Yan wagnika winaya kastâgunanên ng anakêbi têkaping mahâjana,  
Ring bhuktinya tikâstabhâga têkaping puruša kêlar ikâstabhâganên,  
Yan ring sanggama samahâpuruša kâstaguna têkap ika wadhû jana  
Ring strî tan kahanan warêd puruša ling Drupada parama putrikângucap.(NS.4,17).*

The translation

The cleverness and tactic of women are one eighth of wisemen. The women food consumption and strength are one eighth of men. The coitus of men is one eighth of the strength of women. Women never feels satisfy with men that was being stated by the prominent daughter of Drupada.

*Ring wang haywa manût buddhi nikang parajana matêmah winâsa ya,  
Yan strî bhudi tinutakên pati têtahnya inirang-irang ing param-para  
Yapwan satmaka bhudi tusta têtahnya mangangên-angêneka pûrwaka  
Byaktâmanggihakên wisesa kita yan lumêkasakêna budhining guru(NS.4,18)*

The translation

As a human we should not follow a women`s thinking it will cause disaster. If a woman`s thinking is being followed, it will cause death, humiliated, and disgraced by the society. If using our own thinking certainly we can be happy, but first, we have to be cautious. Certainly you will find happiness if you follow my advice.

The stanzas of the above *kakawin* are being observed carefully, it can be seen that how bad and disgrace women are in the view of the *Nitiśâstra* writer. On the 15<sup>th</sup> women is regarded as the one who caused the destruction of the world. Terrible wars are caused by women. On the era of *Kretayuga* there was a war caused by Dewi Renuka. in the period of *Tretayuga*, the terrible was caused by Dewi Sita. The period of *Dwaparayuga*, Dewi Drupadi who caused the terrible war. All the women in this world caused the destruction or the doomsday.

Probably the aims of the writing of *Nitiśâstra Kakawin* as guideline in order to achieve the stage of *Brahmacari* (student should not get marry during studying period). If it is the aim of the writer, it can be accepted that to influence the *brahmacarin* to dislike women. But the way it seemed too excessive.

All women were stated that they are very dishonest, unfaithful and not smart. The women's thinking were not need to be followed because they will cause death/destruction. If men obeyed/followed women thinking, in their intere life they will be disgraced, and humiliated. All women are stupid and weak.

That is the reason why women are not able to work. If that condition what is the used of to get a woman. Women are also strong in having coitus. Their strength is eight time compare to men. Is it still relevant the expression stated in the *Nītisāstra* text, if it is addressed women in recent modern period?

On the other stanza of *Nītisāstra*, proposed a way to choose a woman as a wife. This stanza is controversial to the above stanzas. On the three stanzas above, the existence of women was being disgraced and humiliated, but on the other points there are two stanzas which give suggestion to choose women. Eventhough the choice being proposed was very thight and selective. In choosing a woman to be a wife, it is advisable not to choose a woman who has loud voice. A woman who has loud voice is considered as an arrogant person show off, and the type. vDo not choose a handicapped woman, a woman who has bad smell, begger, and woman who has small breasts. Do not choose a vicious woman who comes from a disgraced decendants. The woman that can be choose is only the woman who has big breasts, beautiful, behave well, prominent decendant and is a virgin.

*Lwir ing awalâ tinggalakêna denta,  
Krêpana daridreka rêsbêb awaknya  
Swaranika mâwor drawa kamadhatri  
Agalak asabdâghrêna ya mapunggung (NS.5,5)*

*Lwir ing awalâ yogya pinaka patni  
Waraguna rûpa dhika kula dhani  
Mapês ikang ambêk ghrêna ya susila  
Kadi panêdêng ning kusuma wicitra (NS.5,6)*

The Translation

Type of woman that you need to ignore  
Physically defected, begger/low class of and have bad smell  
Rude, loud voice and talkative  
Vicious, mean and stupid

Type of woman which is suitable for a wife  
Noble character, beautiful and decendant of good family  
Behave well, honest, sincere and good moral  
Like colourful blooming flowers.

#### 4. Discussion

The description on 2.2 above states that deconstruction is a name given to a critique operational which was partly weakened, or it was shown as weaken each other within the textual process of mening. As an example a woman is an opponent “other party” from man (binary opposition). He who is not a male, is given negative value in relation with male as main principle. As the party that is assumed as the opponent of man, so woman is being weakens, humiliated, and even being disgraced. Deconstruction will open the meaning and find out unrevealed meaning.

In the stanzas of the *kakawin* above if it is well analyze, maily if it is related to the condition of the woman recently, so it can be seen there some irrelevant things or even contradictory.

The 15<sup>th</sup> stanza above stated that since previous time woman such as: Dewi Renuka, Dewi Sita and Dewi Drupadi caused the terrible wars. Then the doomsday was caused by all women.

Let us put our attention to the First and the Second World wars were not caused by women. The war in Malvinas between England and Argentina, the war in Afganistan, Iraq, crisis or civil wars in Vietnam, the tension in Korea; between North and South Korea, and war in Ukraina which happens recently, none of it caused by the bad beahviour of women. But, these wars are caused by ambition, politics and power.

The woman that was being placed as opposition in *Nītisâstra* was a very beautiful ideal woman has class or from a noble decendant, so she becomes the target of all men. Greedy men, who are being enslaved by their lust, will try to get her in a deceitful way. Like the figure of Rahwana who wanted to take Sita eventhough Sita was married to Rama. Is it Sita to be blamed becaused she was born with a beautiful face, so as Dewi Renuka, and Drupadi who are also beautiful. Did they ever ask to be born with beautiful faces? So as with other girls or women who are beautiful in this present period. Is it their fault of having beautiful faces?

In the law of market (buying –selling), if a person wants to buy a thing, often the buyer show the bad side of the condition of the thing he/she wants to buy, eventhough the thing was fine. By showing the bad side of the goods, it has the aims to get lower price of the goods. There is a fear of the “buyer” of his incapability to get “the goods”; which is the cause to express disappointment in the form of excoriation.

This condition can be assumed that the buyer as been `enslaved` by the goods. The same thing happened to the writer of *Nītisâstra Kakawin*. The writer of *Nītisâstra Kakawin* was certainly a male writer. On the other hand the writer of *Nītisâstra*, definitely a person who always feels fear, enslaved by a woman. Or at least he was being disappointed or broken -



hearted because of a woman. If the writer was only aims at teaching a student not to get married during study period by disgracing women, it is a fallacy.

Dewi Drupadi is a beautiful woman who was said as the cause of *Bharatayuddha* war. If the story of war between siblings of Bharata and Kaurawa decendants with Pandawa viewed in more details, so it can be seen that the cause was greed from the character of Kaurawa mainly the character of Duryodhana. Duryodana was being driven by his uncle Sakuni who was willing to take over the entire Astinapura Kingdom. Moreover when Pandawa had made his own palace Amartapura, Duryodhana also wanted to take it over. In short the war of *Bharatayuddha* was not caused by Drupadi but by the greed of the character Duryodhana.

Further *Kakawin Nītisāstra* states that there are three things which have malice behaviour in the world are: woman, roots and river flow. All these three things can be in good conduct if there is a lotus grows on the stone. The statement on the *Kakawin Nītisāstra* was firmly stated that “there will be no woman who is straight (loyal and honest)” in the entire period of the world, because it is impossible for a lotus to grow on a stone. A stone is not a media that can be used by plants to grow and live, except algae/mildew. Plants like lotus can grow only on a soft muddy earth. This statement refers to the meaning of “impossible” This opinion indicates that women as stated in the *Kakawin Nītisāstra*, none have honest behaviour and loyalty in the entire period. Briefly, it can be assumed that *Kakawin Nītisāstra* stated women have bad moral.

On the other part *Nītisāstra* stated that women ways of thinking were not needs to be obeyed. Men who are obeying them are disgraceful men and having miserable life. So there is an assumption which disgracing women.

Based on the statement in *Kakawin Nītisāstra* above, a question appeared why the writer of *Kakawin Nītisāstra* disgracing women? This type of question is only eligible to be uttered by a broken- hearted person or a person who had been hurt by a woman. Because of being hurt, the feeling of hatred occurs or even vindictive to women.

Did the writer ever think that he was born from a woman? Or thinking about how hard if a woman gave birth to a baby? Did the writer of *Nītisāstra* ever feel happy as a man who lived with his wife even further if they have girl and boy? If these questions ever being thought by him, or even if he ever experienced them, so the statement of disgracing women would never be expressed. If the view of the writer of *Nītisāstra* is right, it means there will be never existed the couple who can stay together in their lifetime. It is not necessary to employ female, police woman, female army, or even to elect a female leader, because

woman are immoral. These statement certainly came from them” fear or being enslaved by women”

In terms of perspicacity, strength and eating, the strength of women is one eight compared to men. But the strength women in coitus are eight times stronger compared to men. This opinion is also less appropriate. It can be accepted that the strength of women is far less than men.

In coitus probably it is true that the strength women eight times stronger compared to men. But in terms of intelligence and eating are not the same. It means that the intelligence of women and men are equal. There are women who are strong in eating, but there some who are less strong in eating. Men are also in the same condition. In terms of intelligence between men and women are also alike. It means there are men and women who are intelligence. There are less intelligence women and men. This condition is natural, which is often called as *rwabineda*. *Rwabineda* means “two things being apposed”, i.e: high-low, big-small, good-bad, clever- stupid, etc.

It is a fallacy to say that the intelligence of men is eight times more compared to women. In reality these can be verified from the result of examination on school children in this recent period, in fact that the highest ranks of passing grade were achieved by female students, either in Junior High School or Senior High School. Besides, in this present era many girls achieved their undergraduate degrees, Master and Ph.D. There are women who have high position in government as a Minister, Prime Minister, even as a President of a state.

In choosing a woman to be a wife, *Nītisāstra* stated it with over exaggerated manner. If it is being implied in this era, certainly there will be many men and women who will not find their partners or become “spinster”

*Nītisāstra* stated in choosing a woman to be a wife, it should a woman who does not have loud voice (*gora*). A woman who doesn't have loud voice means a woman who speaks softly, not arrogant, etc. The woman should have *gemuhing* breasts which means has big breasts. A woman, who has “big breasts”, certainly is a fertile woman, because big breasts content a lot milk for breast feeding. A lot of milk in the breast feeding will influence her fertility and the health of the child. A woman with “big breasts” probably has symbolic meaning which is implied to a woman who is clever at earning income to support the family mainly her children.

Besides the criteria above, *Nītisāstra* also suggests in choosing a woman to be a wife, it is suggested not to choose handicapped, immoral and a woman from a disgraced family. But the limit of women who are from a disgraced descendants was not being explained in the *kakawin*.

## 5. Conclusion

*Kakawin Nītisâstra* if it is being analysed by applying the theory of literary deconstruction, particularly on the view of women/feminine is less appropriate. The meaning content in the *kakawin Nītisâstra* is negative i.e: by disgracing and humiliating women. But, if it is being closely analyzed there is an unrevealed meaning. The implied meaning refers to the fear of the *Nītisâstra*'s writer toward the existence of a woman. This is due to that the writer was not able to get a beautiful wife so that he buries his disappointment, broken heart, angry, and hatred. These feelings were expressed through his writing by disgracing and humiliating women. This condition can be said that the writer "being enslaved" or at least there is fear and obedience towards the existence of women.

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