

FEMINISM : THE CASES OF MARIAM AND LAILA IN A *THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS*

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Abstrak

Tulisan ini berjudul Feminisme: Permasalahan Mariam dan Laila di A Thousand Splendid Suns yang difokuskan pada nilai-nilai feminisme tokoh utama didalam novel yang ditulis oleh Khaled Hosseini. Tujuan dari tulisan ini adalah untuk mendeskripsikan karakter Mariam dan Laila berdasarkan tiga dimensi aspek yaitu: fisik, kepribadian, dan kehidupan sosial serta menjabarkan jenis-jenis feminisme yang dialami oleh tokoh utama sebagai hasil dari perlawanan wanita terhadap penindasan dari laki-laki.

Tulisan ini menggunakan tiga metode penelitian seperti: sumber data, metode dan teknik mengumpulkan data, metode dan teknik menganalisis data. Sumber data dari tulisan ini adalah sebuah novel yang berjudul A Thousand Splendid Suns oleh Khaled Hosseini yang dipublikasikan di Great Britain pada tahun 2007. Metode dan teknik mengumpulkan data yang digunakan didalam tulisan ini adalah metode dokumentasi dan teknik baca-catat. Sedangkan untuk menganalisis data, tulisan ini menggunakan tiga teori seperti: teori dari Kenney (1966) sebagai teori utama. Teori oleh Egri (1946) dan teori oleh Lungermann dan Brantely (pada Ritzer, 2000) sebagai teori pendukung. Hasil dari tulisan ini adalah tokoh utama dianalisis berdasarkan tiga dimensi aspek karakter, serta dijelaskan bahwa tokoh utama adalah dua orang perempuan yang bisa membebaskan diri dari penindasan yang dilakukan oleh laki-laki dan mereka bisa mendapatkan hak dan kesempatan yang sama seperti laki-laki khususnya dalam bidang pekerjaan.

Kata kunci: feminisme, tokoh utama, penindasan

1. Background of The Study

Lengermann and Brantley (in Ritzer, 2000), states that Feminist mobilization is divided into three waves . The first wave in nineteen and early twentieth century. The main focus is on gaining the right of human suffrage. This major victory of the movement also included reforms in education, in the workplace and professions, and in healthcare. The second wave was in the 1960s and 1970s, its movement focused on the other issue of equality, such as the end of

discrimination. This wave encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives and deeply politicized, and reflective of a sexist structure of power. The third also the last wave began in the early 1990s, this movement believed that this wave was in response to the backlash against initiatives and movements that were unexpectedly created by the second-wave. This wave focused on sharing the opinion and changing the minds of younger people also used literature as the means of communication to spread their idea.

The phenomenon that is related to this topic happened almost in every part of people's life, for example in TOP NEWS, one of the international newspapers submitted by Jason Ramsev on Tuesday, September 17, 2013. The newspaper informed about sexual violence and harassment which were faced by women police officers in Afghanistan. The sexual harassment and violence were done by their male colleagues. Based on the phenomenon, women were still oppressed and men were authoritative.

To find out the data This study focuses on Mariam and Laila as the main characters of the novel. The reason is to analyze the main characters based on feminism issue because Mariam and Laila have important parts in the story and appear continually from the beginning until the end of the story. They represent the women who were oppressed in Afghanistan. At the end of the story, they got their right as women even become a leader of the community. Furthermore, in this study Mariam and Laila characters were analyzed from feminism issue.

2. Problems of The Study

There are two problems in this study, they are:

- 1) How are the characters of Mariam and Laila described in the novel in terms of physiological, psychological, and sociological aspect?
- 2) How the feminism influence Mariam and Laila's life as the main characters?

3. Aims of The Study

There are two aims that can be formulated in this study based on the problems, such as :

- 1) To describe the characters of Mariam and Laila in terms of physiological, psychological, and sociological aspects
- 2) To analyze the feminism issue in Mariam and Laila's life as the main characters.

4. Research Method

4.1 Data Source

In the way to have valid and reliable data, this study applied primary data and the data of this study were taken from an English novel entitled *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini. It was published in 2007 in Great Britain. There are several reasons of choosing the novel as the data source. The first reason is because the novel is very interesting to be discussed. The second reason is because the novel tells about two women, Mariam and Laila as the main characters who faced many problems that reflected feminism value. They represent the women who were oppressed in Afghanistan and at the ending of the story, they got their right as women even become a leader of the community. Therefore, the novel was chosen to be analyzed in this study.

4.2 Method and Technique of Collecting Data

Documentation method was applied in this study. There are some techniques used to collect the data. The techniques as follows: preparing the research instruments, reading and understanding the story, note taking the sentences explained or spoken by the characters related to the feminism issue, finding out the character of the main characters based on psychological, physiological, and sociological aspect, finding out Mariam and Laila's statements that belong to feminism, identifying the statements from all of characters, and eliminating, sort out the valid and un-valid data and choose the valid data.

4.3 Method and Technique of Analyzing Data

The descriptive qualitative method is the most suitable method to analyze the data because the collected data were qualitatively analyzed based on theory. The techniques which were used in analyzing the data, were divided into three

steps. The first step was identifying the three dimensions aspect of Mariam and Laila as the main characters in the novel. It also analyzed the feminism aspects reflected by the main characters. The second step was classifying the relevant data into its categories. The third also the last step was analyzing the data using the some theories.

5. Result and Discussion

5.1 Mariam in Terms of Physiological, Psychological and Sociological Aspect

Physically, Mariam has a long chin, thin lips, and soft skin. Psychologically, she was considered a woman who is full of love, like flowers, and friendly. Sociologically, she was a “*harami*”, bastard, uneducated, and Islamic woman.

- (a) “ The truth is, he didn’t even hold you until you were a mount old. And then only to look down once, comment on **your longish face**, and hand you back to me.” (Hosseini, 2007: 12)
- (b) Fariba must have recognized her, walking in burqa beside Rasheed. She waved, and called out, “*Eid Mubarak!*”
From inside the burqa, Mariam gave her ghost of a nod.
(Hosseini, 2007: 79)
- (c) “ **You are a clumsy little *harami*.** This is my reward for everything I’ve endured. An heirloom-breaking, clumsy little *harami*.”
(Hosseini, 2007: 4)

5.2 Laila in Terms of Physiological, Psychological and Sociological Aspects

The physical appearance of Laila is that she is a beautiful woman with her light hair, her pink cheeks, her rosebud lips, and green eyes. Psychologically, she is a smart woman who is full of love, and enthusiastic person. The sociological condition of Laila is that she lived with her parents. Her father loves her very much. Unfortunately, her mother does not care with her. While Laila has the best friends, their love is for each other.

- (d) One time, he’d tapped her on the shoulder and said, **you’re so very pretty**, yellow hair. I want to marry you. (Hosseini,2007: 116)
- (e) For the last two years, **Laila had received the *awal numra* certificate, given yearly to the top-ranked student in each grade.** (Hosseini, 2007: 114)
- (f) An uncharacteristically subdued Hasina and her mother came. So did Giti and her mother. When Giti saw Laila, she hurried over,

threw her bony arms around her, and gave Laila a very long, and surprisingly strong, embrace. When she pulled back, tears had pooled in her eyes. “ I am so sorry, Laila,” she said. Laila thanked her. **The three girls sat outside in the yard until one of the women assigned them the task of washing glasses and stacking plates on the table.** (Hosseini, 2007: 136)

5.3 The Types of Feminism: The Cases of Mariam and Laila

(1) Liberal Feminism

The explanation of liberal feminism is based on the gender inequality turned by the interplay of four factors, such as the social construction of gender, the gendered division of labor, the doctrine and practice of public and private spheres and patriarchy ideology. The liberal feminists argue that they should have the same opportunity and right between men and women (Lingermann and Brantley, in Ritzer, 2000).

(g) **It was Mullah Faizullah who had taught Mariam to read, who had patiently looked over her shoulders as her lips worked the words soundlessly, her index finger lingering beneath each word, pressing until the nail bed went white, as though she could squeeze the meaning out of the symbols. It was Mullah Faizullah who had held her hand, guided the pencil in it along the rise of each alef, the curve of each *beh*, the three dots of each *she*.** (Hosseini, 2007: 16)

(2) Radical Feminism

Radical feminism defines the feature of women’s oppression and beliefs that women can free themselves only when they have done away with what they consider inherently oppressive and dominating system. The radical feminists feel that there is a man based authority and power structure that is responsible for oppression and inequality because the society will not be able to be reformed in any significant way. (Lengermann and Brantley, in Ritzer: 2000).

(h) “ Rasheed” he looked up. **Mariam swung, she hit him across the temple.** The blow knocked him off Laila. Rasheed touched his head with the palm of his hand. He looked at the blood of his fingers. (Hosseini, 2007: 340)

(3) Social and Marxist Feminism

Socialist feminism connects the oppression of women to Marxist ideas about exploitation, oppression, and labor. Socialist feminists focus on their energies on broad change that affects society as a whole, and not just on an individual basis. They see the need to work alongside not just men, but all other groups, as they see oppression of women as a part of a large pattern that affects everyone involved in the capitalist system (Lengermann and Brantley, in Ritzer: 2000).

- (i) In the morning, **Laila starts her work. She brings a pail filled with rags, disinfectant, a toilet brush, and spray wax for the dressers. She also vacuums, makes the bed, and dusts.** (Hosseini, 2007: 367)

(4) Existential Feminism

Existential feminism explains about the worst part of all of these roles played out by women such as mother, wife, prostitute, narcissist, and mystic are constructed by men. There are four ways that women can overcome this oppression that women should go to work, become intellectuals, work toward social reform, and refuse to internalize the otherness that has been created (Lengermann and Brantley, in Ritzer: 2000).

- (j) The orphanage playgroup has a row of apple saplings now along the east-facing wall. **Laila is planning to plant some on the south wall as well as soon as it is rebuilt.** There is a new swing set, new monkey bars, and a jungle gym. (Hosseini, 2007: 399)

(5) Gynocentric Feminism

The gynocentric feminists' activities are based on the power of the women which can be exploited and discovered. (Lungermann and Brantley, in Ritzer: 2000).

- (k) This past winter, **Laila bought a few beds for the children's sleeping quarters, pillows too, and proper wool blankets. She had cast-iron stoves installed for the winter.** (Hossini, 2007: 399)

(6) Postmodern Feminism

In postmodern, the largest departure from other branches of feminism is the argument that gender is constructed through language. Other postmodern feminist works highlight stereotypical gender roles, only to portray them as parodies of the original beliefs. (Lungermann and Brantley, in Ritzer: 2000).

- (1) Then one day he told Lila he wouldn't take her anymore. " I'm too tired from walking the streets all day."
" Then I'll go by myself," Laila said. " You can't stop me, Rasheed. Do you hear me? You can hit me all you want, but I'll keep going there." (Hosseini, 2007: 313)

(7) Multicultural Feminism

Multicultural feminism has different characteristics from postmodern feminism. This type of feminism is contributed by the intensity of vary social condition. But, in some extend, multicultural feminism is just for those who have power and dominance can influence the social change (Lungermann and Brantley, in Ritzer: 2000).

- (m) **Laila has resigned herself to moving on.** For her own sake, for Tariq's, for her children's. And for Mariam who still visits Laila in her dreams, who is never more than a breath pr two below her consciousness. **Laila has moved on. Because in the end she knows that's all she can do. That and hope.** (Hosseini, 2007: 399)

(8) Postcolonial Feminism

Postcolonial feminism argues that oppression relating to the colonial experience, particularly racial, class, and ethnic oppression have marginalized women in postcolonial societies. They challenge the assumption that gender oppression is the primary force of patriarchy. (Lungermann and Brantley, in Ritzer: 2000).

- (n) **One day, a young Talib beat Laila with a radio antenna.** When he was done, he gave a final whack to the back of her neck and said. **" I see you again, I'll beat you until your mother's milk leaks out of your bones."** (Hosseini, 2007: 313)

(9) Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism sees the domination of women as stemming from the same ideologies that bring about dominating of the environment. Patriarchy system is the condition where men own and control the land seen as responsible for the oppression of women and destruction of the natural environment. Ecofeminists feel that women must work towards creating a healthy environment and ending the destruction of the lands that most women rely on to provide for their families. (Lungermann and Brantley, in Ritzer: 2000).

- (o) But, it isn't mere homesickness or nostalgia that has Laila thinking of Kabul so much these days. She has become plagued by restlessness. **She hears of schools built in Kabul, roads repaved, women returning to work.** (Hosseini, 2007: 378)

6. Conclusion

Based on the story of the novel, there are two main characters namely Mariam and Laila. They are two Afghani women who were oppressed by the men and their government. Mariam and Laila were illustrated through three aspects of character such as physiological, psychological, and sociological. There are three waves of feminism mobilization, each of them introduced the types of feminism which was clearly reflected through Mariam and Laila as the main characters in the novel. Although, based on the novel which was published in 2007, the third wave is suitable to reflect the feminism issue in the main characters' life because the wave began in the early 1990s and focused on sharing the opinion, changing the minds of younger people also used literature as the means of communication to spread their idea. The kinds of feminism in this wave include: postmodern feminism, multicultural feminism, postcolonial feminism, and ecofeminism.

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