

OPPRESSION ON WOMAN AS REFLECTED IN LAKSHMI'S CHARACTER OF *SOLD* NOVEL BY PATRICIA MCCORMICK

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ABSTRACT

In this research, the researcher shows the forms of oppression which occur toward female character named Lakshmi. The five faces of oppression is a theory that is explained by Irish Marion Young. The kinds of oppression toward women can be found in Lakshmi's character of *Sold* novel. This form of oppression somehow called as injustice action that adhere toward people or group because of several reasons, such as class, race and gender. The source of data of this study are collected from Patricia McCormick's *Sold* novel and the data for this study is the evidence of oppression toward Lakshmi. The oppression is divided into exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence. The results of this study are, Lakshmi got five faces oppression from group or person. Based on that analysis, the researcher concludes that the oppression toward women can be done by men also women. Therefore, the researcher believes that the oppression toward women is not happens because of gender that men is superior rather than women, but oppression can be happened due to power of domination and class.

Keywords: Oppression, exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness.

ABSTRAK

Dalam penelitian ini, peneliti menunjukkan bentuk-bentuk penindasan yang terjadi terhadap tokoh perempuan bernama Lakshmi. Lima macam penindasan adalah teori yang dijelaskan oleh Iris Marion Young. Macam-macam penindasan terhadap perempuan dapat ditemukan dalam tokoh Lakshmi di novel Sold. Bentuk penindasan ini disebut sebagai tindakan ketidakadilan yang menimpa orang atau kelompok karena beberapa alasan, seperti golongan, ras dan jenis kelamin. Sumber data penelitian ini dikumpulkan dari novel Sold oleh Patricia McCormick's dan data penelitian ini dari tindakan penindasan terhadap Lakshmi. Penindasan dibagi menjadi eksploitasi, marginalisasi, ketidakberdayaan, imperialisme budaya dan kekerasan. Hasil penelitian ini adalah, Lakshmi mendapat lima macam penindasan dari kelompok atau orang. Berdasarkan analisis tersebut, peneliti menyimpulkan bahwa penindasan terhadap perempuan dapat dilakukan oleh laki-laki maupun perempuan.

Peneliti meyakini bahwa penindasan terhadap perempuan bukan terjadi karena jenis kelamin laki-laki lebih unggul daripada perempuan, tetapi penindasan dapat terjadi karena kekuasaan dominasi dan kelas.

Kata kunci: Penindasan, eksploitasi, marginalisasi, ketidakberdayaan.

A. INTRODUCTION

Literature is the imitation of life. Literature is the reflection on how people interpret, think or believe in something. De Bonald says in Wellek and Warren in *Theory of Literature* that “literature is an expression of society” (95). It means that through literature, a situation or condition can reflect like politics, economics, and social life of some people in a certain time. When we are reading it, we could know the norms, act or society. Literature reflects a story about life. Life contains social phenomena. Social phenomena come from cultural, race, religious, society and political situations. Literature records phenomena that happen in society. Poem, prose, drama and novel are the kinds of the literary works.

One of the social phenomena found in society is oppression. Moreover, the oppression always shows up in the literary works to tell the injustice from the sequences of the story. The researcher focuses to find the kinds of oppression in one of Patricia McCormick’s novels that had been published in 2006. Furthermore, to analyze the kind of oppression that is found in this novel, the researcher analyzed Lakshmi’s character the main character in *Sold* novel by using the theory of five faces of oppression by Iris Young. Young stated there are five type of oppression, in the following forms. The first is exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. Therefore, this research is expected to inspire the future researcher to analyze a novel through character point of view especially about oppression and gynocriticism.

B. RELATED THEORY

1. Novel

Klarer has stated that novel is distinguished into its length, narrative structures, depiction of characters, and plot patterns (10). This statement is also in line with “a move away from an essentially religious view of life towards a new interest in the complexities of everyday experience. Most of novels are concerned with ordinary people and their problems in the societies in which they find themselves” (Peck and Coyle, 102). Based on the previous statements, the researcher concludes that novel is a long shape of narrative structures that contain characters, settings, and plot in it as a reflection of our life in society, from the ordinary people that have the story in human problems experience.

2. Character and Characterization

According to Abrams, “character is people who are appeared in a narrative prose or novel and it is interpreted by the readers as a person who has moral quality and certain tendency such as being expressed in what they say and what they do” (76). Abram’s statement is also in line with, “a character can be rendered either as types or as individuals...and usually denotes a persona with more complex and differentiated features” (Klarer, 17). Based on the previous statements, the researcher concludes that character is individuals or people who are appeared in the narrative prose or novel that are portrayed to helps the readers interpreted and understand the entire story.

Characterization means that the authors usually reveal and present with the direct description by showing the action of the character or by the presentation of other characters that help define each other (“Elements of Fiction”¹). Through characterization the readers can understand and interpret the story through the dialogue, action or activity from one character to the other one.

3. Gynocriticism

From Elaine Showalter’s model of Gynocriticism, it is a literary analysis from a gynocentric viewpoint that places woman at center. Gynocriticism in Elaine Showalter’s model is a socio historical investigation that explores literature by focusing on the historical background, subject matter, genres, and structure of literature by women to frame a method of analyzing literature written by women and to create models of interpretation fashioned on female experience, rather than adopting male interpretive theoretical models. From gynocriticism, Showalter proposes three phases of women’s writing which is the feminine phase, the condition when female writers tried to write as men and adhere to male values, the feminist phase the theme of criticizing the role of women in society and the female phase is the phase that the women writers no longer write the combative or try to prove the women’s perspective.

4. Five Kinds of Oppression

Young stated that oppression means the acts of the ruling group (Young, 38). The oppression has a relationship with domination, the domination of one group or more. The domination group wins to conquest another group or people. The five faces of oppression are the reflection of a condition in a society. Young decided to divide the term oppression into five categories to tell the injustice for this situation, which is: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence.

a. Exploitation

The form of exploitation is prostitution. Perhaps, it is one of the world’s oldest forms of exploitation toward women. Young said that “women undergo

specific forms of gender exploitation in which their energies and power are expended, often unnoticed and unacknowledged, usually to benefit men” (Young, 48). Based on Young’s theory, the form of gender exploitation is prostitution or an act to give an advantage for the man. It is called as gender exploitation, when women are joining to the workplaces to serve like sexual labor or caring for others’ bodies. Their status as women is to giving them sexual or emotional service. The indicators of gender and race exploitation are the power of workers that they give to the master; the example is the transferring of the creative work, sexual energies, emotional service or nurturing from women to men and the labor service material.

b. Marginalization

Racial oppression is the cause of marginal people. They live in a shadow because they racially marked in society. Marginal are the people that will not use as a labor. Young stated that marginalization maybe the most concern category of oppression, because people that live in marginalization area do not have the contribution in the society, they cannot find the jobs, they cannot get the service because they are being ignored, and this can grow to the further step which is the extermination. People that lived in marginal area usually get marginalization oppression because several people in the different area make the wall of boundaries toward them. The indicators of marginalization are the contribution in the social activities like the growing underclass of people that live in the marginal society. People that lived in marginal area usually get marginalization oppression because several people in the different area make the wall of boundaries toward them, they do not have the opportunity to work in a society, they tend to be passive because they are being forgotten and ignored.

c. Powerlessness

When there is a power in society it also has the opposite thing which is the powerlessness. The power or the domination group itself is the phenomenon that reflects in the society. The professionals are the one who rule the workers or known as the nonprofessionals. The nonprofessionals are getting a disrespectful treatment because they are not getting the status and power to say their mind. The indicators of powerlessness are the exploited groups, they are the subject of taking order from the other and they have no power and authority.

d. Cultural Imperialism

The category that stated before refers to the oppression and the power in the society. Young stated another category that called cultural imperialism, and it means the dominant meanings of the society which is called the one or another group, we could call as stereotyping the group, we make a mark to the group and measure their culture and norms. Young stated that the acts of measuring and looking the other groups called as double consciousness (55). The dominant

group marks the other as a different, and the oppressed group has the experience of being treated injustice of cultural imperialism.

e. Violence

The last and important category in the kinds of oppression based on Young's theory is the violence. The dominants groups rule toward the oppressed groups, the oppressed groups suffer because of this violence. They get physical violence, sexual assault, racist violence and terror. "Members of some groups live with the knowledge that they must fear random, unprovoked attacks on their person or property, which have no motive but to damage, humiliate, or destroy the person" (Young, 56). The purposes of the harassment or intimidation are to humiliate or degrade the members and acts of violence is the social injustice that ruled by members of a group.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

1. Research Design

The descriptive qualitative research design, this study designed the method of describing the society and condition of the analysis. Kothari said that descriptive research studies concerned with specific predictions, with narration of facts and characteristics concerning individual, group or situation are all examples of descriptive research studies (Kothari 37). Furthermore, the results of the data were presented in forms of words and sentences.

2. Data and Data Source

The main data of this study were the dialogues, thoughts and actions of Lakshmi and other characters that relate the criteria in five faces of oppression toward Lakshmi that happens in this novel. The data presented in a form of words, phrases and paragraphs. The source of data in this study is the novel entitled *Sold* by Patricia McCormick which was published in 2006.

3. Data Collection

In collecting the data, the researcher used the observation method. The researcher applied the systematic ways in collecting the data. The observation method that used in collecting the data were reading the novel and taking the important notes, next after the data have been highlighted, the researcher put the data to the table.

4. Data Analysis

After collected the data, the researcher analyzed and processed the data with the steps proposed by Miles and Huberman. The analysis techniques are data reduction, data display and conclusion: drawing/verification (10). In this study, the researcher uses Miles and Huberman technique in analyzing the data, they are:

a. Data Reduction

Data reduction is the step in reducing the data in this study. The researcher selected carefully with focusing in the content that contains the five faces of oppression to be analyzed for answering the research problem in this thesis. The researcher categorized the data based on the Young's theory. Those are exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, violence.

b. Data Display

The second step is data display; it contains the category of five faces of oppression and the data described with word description based on the indicator category of the theory. The researcher organized the data with coding. The five faces of oppression coded by using these following rules. Each faces of oppression already given a code. It started with three first letters of the category of the Conclusion Drawing

After doing the data reduction and data display, the last step to analyze the data in this study is to draw and verify the conclusion with the data that researcher analyze before. In this last step is the process of the researcher made the conclusion from the data and the analysis that contain the answer of the research problem about the oppression on woman phenomena.

5. Triangulation

To improve the analysis and the findings, the validation of the data is really important in the study. In this study, the researcher uses triangulation as a method to reinforce the credibility of the findings in the study. According to Denzin, there are four types of triangulation, which are data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation (304).

- 1) Data Triangulation is a method which uses the variety of data sources from different sources and at different times, in different places and from different people.
- 2) Investigator Triangulation is a method which uses more than one investigator, observer, interviewer, and researcher to analyze the data on a study.
- 3) Theory Triangulation is a method which uses multiple of theories or hypotheses when verifying the phenomena.
- 4) Methodological Triangulation is a method which uses multiple methods to examine the phenomena or situation.

Based from the explanation above, the researcher used the data triangulation as a method to validate the researcher's data. In data triangulation, the researcher uses some data sources which are from the novel and also the previous study that concerns with the same issue with the researcher's study. This method is used in order to strengthen the analysis of the women oppression phenomenon in the novel.

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. The Oppression on Lakshmi as the Main Character of *Sold* Novel

This part is the finding of the study. It deals with the kinds of oppression found on the character of *Sold* Novel. The main character named Lakshmi is the representation of oppression toward woman in this novel, she struggles with the treatments that she gets in her life. Based on Iris Young's theory in her book, the researcher found the same indicator with the character in the novel. The main character named Lakshmi got several acts of oppression. Oppression divided into five kinds, they are exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence. The injustice acts like oppression is common happened when the domination group shows their superiority toward the inferior group or people like. It happened when the inferior group or people get oppressed or get the violence acts by getting the threat message and attack from the superior group or people that has motivation to destroy, humiliate or degrade the oppressed group.

a. Exploitation

The researcher found 11 data which belong to exploitation that identified. Here is one of the example of exploitation.

(Data 6: EXP)

"You belong to me," she says. And I paid a pretty sum for you too" She opens to a page in her books and points to the notation for 10.000 rupees...."You will take men to your room."...."You will work here, like the other girls, until your debt is paid off." (McCormick: 106)

In the Happiness House, Lakshmi met Mumtaz, so Mumtaz introduced her with her debt book and showed how much she should pay the debt. Mumtaz showed to Lakshmi the notation for 10.000 rupees. Mumtaz told Lakshmi to work and take men to her room. Mumtaz also said that Lakshmi should work like the other girls did in equally until her debt is paid off.

From this dialogue, Mumtaz the mother of prostitution house told Lakshmi that Lakshmi belonged to her and Mumtaz can do everything she wanted to do with her because Lakshmi had the debt so Lakshmi should obey the rule. **"You belong to me," she says. And I paid a pretty sum for you too."** This evidence shows that Lakshmi experienced the exploitation because she cannot do anything, she did not have any option and all she needed to do was taking the men every night in her room for paid her debt.

b. Marginalization

There were 2 practices of marginalization. Here is one of the examples of marginalization.

(Data 1: MAR)

"**City girls have pretty dresses.**" She says from behind her yellow cloud. "And fancy bubbles. They eat oranges, dates, and mangoes every day. It is the easy life." (McCormick: 43)

The condition of Lakshmi's family was poor and one day there was a festival, she only watched that festival from far and Lakshmi met a woman, the woman asked her to join in the dance party. This woman wore a nice dress and Lakshmi was paying attention to her nice dress, Lakshmi never knows how it feels when wears pretty dresses. The woman knew Lakshmi saw her dress, so she asked Lakshmi to the city. She invited Lakshmi to go to the city.

The woman said to Lakshmi that city girls could eat oranges, dates and mangoes every day. The woman also said that people that lived in the city had the easy life, differently with people that lived in the mountain, because people from the city got the better opportunity, they can have pretty dresses and well foods "**City girls have pretty dresses.**" Differently with Lakshmi who lived in a small village that did not have any chance to get the better jobs. Lakshmi interested with the woman's offering, all Lakshmi wanted was going to the city for a better job and a better future. People in the mountain could not found the job and got the marginal oppression in their area made them feel outcast and got the marginalization oppression, Lakshmi also thought the same thing. From the woman dialogue to Lakshmi, it showed the marginalization according to Young's indicator.

c. Powerlessness

There were 3 cases of powerlessness in *Sold* novel. Here is one of the examples of powerlessness.

(Data 1: POW)

"Your family will get nothing, not one rupee, **if you do not obey your new auntie,**" (McCormick: 54)

Lakshmi got the new job with her Auntie Bimla the one that took, bought her and went to India. She thought that she will work as a maid, turned out she should work as prostitute and the Auntie Bimla brought her to the new auntie named Auntie Mumtaz. The new auntie threatened her about Lakshmi's family will get nothing if she did not obey the rule of Auntie Mumtaz. She would not get paid if she did not follow the rule of her new auntie. "**if you do not obey your new auntie,**" from Auntie Bimla's dialogue to Lakshmi, the class struggle was shown. The new auntie which Auntie Mumtaz had higher class than Lakshmi that was the reason she should obey the rule. Lakshmi had lack of authority and could not say anything because Auntie Mumtaz threatened her. This evidence showed that Lakshmi got the powerlessness treatment from her new auntie.

d. Cultural Imperialism

The result of this study provides that there are 2 examples of cultural imperialism found in *Sold* novel. Here is one of the examples of cultural imperialism.

(Data 1: CUL)

"Don't come out for any reason" she says, "If you must use the privy, **cover your face and head** with your shawl." (McCormick: 14)

Lakshmi got the first menstruation cycle, so she told her mother about the first cycle she had. Lakshmi's mother told her many traditions. Her mother told Lakshmi to do not come out for any reason and also Lakshmi should cover her face and head with shawl every time she is going out. Even for seven days and seven nights, Lakshmi's mother told Lakshmi to stay in the darkness of the goat shed.

This evidence showed that Lakshmi suffered from the hierarchy of gender in her society. She got the oppression through cultural imperialism, Lakshmi got the first menstruation in her life so her mother told Lakshmi that she should not come out for any reason; make an eye contact to neither men nor the plants.

Every time when she needed to go out she must cover her face and head with shawl, so the stigma happened toward women, when women could bring doom to society on her menstruation cycle. When women not allowed being alone with a man because it will be women fault to not cover her face and head when they were going out. Lakshmi spent her seven days in the goat shed because her mother told her to stay in the darkness. The superior group had control of society in Lakshmi's culture. The superior group is making a value in a negative way toward women. Cultural imperialism happened because of the dominant norms are made up in a society.

e. Violence

The researcher found 10 data which belong to violence in *Sold* novel. Here is one of the example of violence.

(Data 1: VIO)

"Then Mumtaz flies at me. She grabs me by the hair and drags me across the room. She flings me onto the bed next to the old man." (McCormick: 103)

Lakshmi knew that she is forced to serve man, so she rejected and did not want to obey order from Mumtaz because she was saying no, Mumtaz was pulling Lakshmi by her hair and dragging her across the room. Mumtaz was throwing Lakshmi to the bed next to the old man. From this action, the researcher saw that Mumtaz was giving the physical violence toward Lakshmi. When Lakshmi did not want to serve the old man, Mumtaz grabbed her hair and dragged her, Lakshmi suffered because the acts of violence that she received. **"She grabs me by the hair and drags me across the room."** Mumtaz gave the violence to Lakshmi with the purpose of the harassment to humiliate or degrade Lakshmi. This evidence showed that the Lakshmi got the oppression from Mumtaz.

E. CONCLUSION

After analyzing the oppression toward Lakshmi's character in the novel using the theory of Iris Marion Young, which is the five faces of oppression, there is one question in this research. It is to find the kinds of oppression in the character of Lakshmi in the author's writing. There were 105 data of oppression. Then the data were fulfilled the kinds of oppression based on theory which known as exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence. The oppression that experienced by Lakshmi is caused by male which is Lakshmi's stepfather toward Lakshmi and female like Mumtaz and Auntie Bimla the different class condition between Lakshmi and the other member or groups but mostly caused by the female characters toward Lakshmi.

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