

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to focus on the main problems which are the oppression and the struggle depicted in the novel, the thesis considers that feminist criticism is appropriate to be applied in this analysis. In this case, feminist criticism is used to analyze the case on how women are oppressed and their struggles to end the oppression throughout their life, which is portrayed in the novel, entitled *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.

Feminism always deals with the patriarchal system. The concept of patriarchal system manifested in the family is also needed in order to know the oppressions that Mariam and Laila endure throughout their life. Moreover, the concept also helps the thesis writer in revealing Mariam and Laila's struggle dealing with the oppression that they face.

#### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

According to Jackson in the *Contemporary Feminist Theories*, feminism is a social theory that has been concerned with understanding fundamental inequalities between women and men with the analyses of male power over women (12). Then, feminism theory analyzes the conditions which shape women's life and to explore cultural understanding of what it means to be a woman (Jackson 12). In other words, feminism is a diverse, competing, and often opposing collection of social theories, political movements, and moral

philosophies, largely motivated by or concerning the experiences of the women, especially in terms of their social, political, and economical inequalities (13).

Feminist critics are largely concerned with women issues that are closely related to patriarchal system. Patriarchy is a system where the societies portray men's domination over woman and it continues to the male dominance in all aspects in society (Kandiyoti 80). Every society gives higher status to male – power, authority, prestige and position – than to the non-maternal roles of females (Goldberg 45). In other words, in this patriarchal system men have stronger position to decide everything. Within the family, a dominant authority is given to father or husband. He has a right to control his family both domestic and public spheres. Moreover, the supreme authority is given to the male in all social life especially in family. They dominate over his wife and children.

Through marriage, women cannot expect anything from their husbands. They must be submissive to their husbands because women are created to be their husband's helper (Goldberg 87). Therefore, it is natural for a woman to be submissive to man. Even though, they are bearing children for the sake of their husbands, it is not a guarantee that their husbands will respect and treat them well. In *The Inevitability of Patriarchy*, Goldberg argues that in the patriarchal society some males consider females as the accessories of the house that can be kept or hidden or as a servant who must work and serve them all day long (87). It can be assumed that women who become the 'accessories' in the house, mostly they become the victim of the men's authority. Patriarchal system views men are powerful and women are things or object; husbands are masters and wives are servants; and men are superior, women are inferior (89).

Patriarchy is associated with the subordination and oppression of women. Women and children are subjected to the violence and abuse of men. One of the most obvious manifestations of the patriarchal system is the father or husband's domination over his wife and children. Meanwhile, power imbalance between husband and wife may create conflict what so called domestic violence. Deaton argues in *Growing Free: A Manual for Survivors of Domestic Violence* that domestic violence is any form of controlling or abusive behavior that occurs in a domestic relationship (2). It takes many forms such as physical, psychological and sexual abuse (2). Patriarchal system is the basis ground of the oppression and women are the only victims of it. Men are aware of their privilege so they have power to abuse or intimidate their partners. In *Sexual Politics*, Millet says that the traditional patriarchy grants the father nearly a total ownership over wife and children including the power of physical abuse, and even murder and sale (34). If a woman accepts her social condition as a passive side, it drives her to be defenseless both physically and emotionally towards man's assault (36). Culturally, patriarchy gives permission of violence against women.

Consequently, in a family, women do not have the right to make decisions. Patriarchal system states that the decision is on husband or father's hand. Woman's freedom is taken away in deciding whom she wants to marry (Kandiyoti 98). It is easy to understand that this condition brings disadvantage for women and most of the times; women are more depressed than men in the marriage life. Therefore, Tong suggests that women's dependency emphasize that women are weak, passive, nurture, irrational, submissive, et cetera (47).

### 2.1.1 Oppression

In her book entitled *Oppression*, Marilyn Fyre argues that oppression is a pattern of system of inequality which gives power and privilege to members of one group of people to restrain or prevent the other's mobility (147). Women are oppressed or dominated by men. The structural arrangements that initiate, support, and legitimate the domination systematic oppression constitute patriarchy (Goldberg 65). Thus, women oppression is always determined by four structures: productions, sexualities, reproductions and socializations (Fyre 150). Fyre explains further that

in production, women are not given enough opportunities to involve in production sphere. Women are kept only in domestic sphere. In sexuality, women simply become the tool to satisfy men's sexual desire. In reproduction, women are valued only in terms of their ability to reproduce – bear children. The last in socialization, women are oppressed in the social sphere. Because men own the society, thus women are also owned by men and women's space is limited in society (151-154).

Men learn how to be a leader and get the power of authority since they were children. So the women learn to obey and submit since they were children. Fyre argues that men think that they have a right to enforce their power over women. Since then, women become their objects of oppression (170). The way to end up this oppression is to put an end to class and gender because women oppression is caused by intersection of gender and class. Women must work with men in all

spheres. (166). Fyre also argues, there are two main reasons why man oppresses woman.

First, men want power to have control over women because it is in their rational self-interest to do so, to have the concrete benefits and privileges over women. Second, they have power to dominate women. Men and high class women since they are afraid of lower class women's opportunities to oppress and take the control back upon them (172).

Meadows argues that there are some kinds of oppression or violence. Two of them are physical and emotional oppression. Physical oppression is physical violence which can become in the form of sanctioned punishment that ranging from 'spankings' to uncontrolled beatings (13). Another oppression is emotional oppression that means a consistent pattern of the unfair attitude for certain period (14). He also argues that there are two causes of the emotional oppression. First, emotional oppression that is caused by physical oppression for example sexual harassment. Second, emotional oppression happens without needing these two kinds of oppression (15). The emotional oppression can be done through two ways: utterance, and attitude. There are some ways that can be done through the utterance.

First, the oppressor sets himself as a judge. He does not want anybody against his opinion. In this case, the oppressor oppresses people just for his fun and authority (50). Second, the oppressor oppresses sets himself as a history man. This kind of oppressor always remembers every fault and badness of people (51). Third, the oppressor will set himself as the truest

man. He will always blame 'his victim' because he feels that he is always right (53).

Emotional oppression can also be done through attitude. Usually the oppressor becomes a scolding man. This kind of person can be burst terrifyingly when the pressure of life becomes more and more stressful. He is going to seize the peace from the people around him. Usually he scolds the others because he cannot control his emotion (69).

The major impact on the victims of the violence is emotional or intangible losses. Such losses include long-term problems such as pain and suffering and reduced quality of life (72).

### 2.1.2 Sisterhood

Sisterhood is the term which concerns in the solidarity among women. Oyewumi argues that "sisterhood speaks women's solidarity. The meaning it carries for its originators and deployers is one of shared oppression, common victimization, community of interests, solidarity and collective activism" <Oyewumi, Oyeronke. *Ties that (un)bind: Feminism, Sisterhood and Other Foreign elations* [http://www.jendajournal.com/vol1.1/oyewumi.com\\_page\\_1](http://www.jendajournal.com/vol1.1/oyewumi.com_page_1)>. Therefore, dealing with the sisterhood, Aune suggests that "we need to listen to others' concerns, others' oppression and ask how we can contribute to ending them" <[Aune, Kristin. \*Whatever happened to sisterhood\* http://www.thefword.org.uk/features/2003/01/whatever\\_happened\\_to\\_sisterhood.pdf page 5](http://www.thefword.org.uk/features/2003/01/whatever_happened_to_sisterhood.pdf)>. Sisterhood was crucial to the success of second wave (1970s) feminism. The second wave of feminism concerns with the oppression against

women. Radical feminism movements focus on the main root of the women's oppression. Arivia suggests that the radical feminists emphasize that the patriarchal system is the main root of the oppression and violence against women (103). According to the radical feminists, the distinctions among domestic and public spheres results in the oppression (102).

The feminist argument for sisterhood has always been that men are put first in society and women are in the second (Aune 5). Therefore, sisterhood is a kind of women's bonds. In the sisterhood concept women still have close relationships with other women, even when they live with a male partner and have children (Aune 5). Female friendship takes our original sight of ourselves and friends. It is always a dual vision that is exercised with tension, but also with thoughtfulness and passion. It gives women a world in which they can be happy (Aune 8). According to Oyewumi, sisterhood was informed by racist and classist (1). It means that sisterhood is a result of the racisms. Sisterhood is also symbolize victimization and shared oppression, which make for equal relations and solidarity. Solidarity is needed to end the oppression against women.

## **2.2 Reviews on Related Studies**

*A Thousand Splendid Suns* is the best seller novel in more than 25 countries and has been translated into more than 30 languages. The novel was released on May 22, 2007 and received favorable prepublication reviews from Kirkus, Publishers Weekly, Library Journal and Booklist. This novel is truly shocking story. So far, the writer has not found any study concerning this novel. The study deals with women's oppression conducted by Hermarini Oktaviani. In her thesis

entitled *Domestic Violence against Women Portrayed in Squad's Burned Alive*, she examines how the domestic violence against Lebanon's woman is portrayed in the novel. She defines the domestic violence into three aspects such as physical, psychological and sexual abuse. She also examines how women in the novel positioned in both private and public spheres such as education, right to live, and marriage as they are related to the domestic violence.

Another study dealing with women's oppression is also conducted by Satish Kumar and S.D Gupta. In the journal entitled *Masculinity and Violence against Women in Marriage: an Exploratory Study in Rajashtan*, they examine what the factors including lifetime experiences and process and also cultural values that shape men's masculine identity in Rajashtan, India. The most common type of violence against women worldwide is domestic violence, defined as the physical, emotional or psychological, and sexual abuse of women by their intimate partner. In India, domestic violence is a pervasive problem. In the part of the factors including lifetime experiences, they describe masculine roles into three such as providers, protectors and procreators. The provider role is understood as being a hard worker through earning money and providing social status for the family. However, for Rajput men being a hard worker and earning for the family are not as important as gaining social status and prestige for the family. For them, social status and prestige stems from having a moustache, being courageous and taking part in issues that concern society. The role of procreator is closely tied to masculine sexuality. Having children emerges as a universal sign of masculinity. According to Rajasthani, having children is an important of fulfilling the responsibilities of men in the family. The role of protector views courageous man



who protects the honor of the household by protecting the children and women in the family. In the domestic sphere, the protector is viewed a fearless and courageous man who protects the honor of the household by protecting the children and women in the family. A man who is not able to protect his wife is considered unmanly and incapable of sustaining a family.

They also examine how those factors affect domestic violence through the influence of masculinity. They explain that the act of violence against women has been classified as control – restrictions, sanction and surveillance; emotional, physical and sexual violence. Men often use violence in these situations to reassert their masculine authority. When women do not fulfill the responsibilities dealing with the households, the domestic violence can result. Keeping a wife under control is a common sign of masculinity and men assume that it is the wife's duty to adhere to whatever her husband tells her. In other words, disobedience on the part of a woman results in punishment by the husband. Violence as a punishment for women's actions is closely linked to men's sense of entitlement to certain masculine privileges. <Kumar, Satish and S.D Gupta. *Masculinity and Violence against Women in Marriage: An Explanatory Study in Rajashtan*. <[http://www.icrw.org/docs/DV\\_India\\_report4\\_52002.pdf](http://www.icrw.org/docs/DV_India_report4_52002.pdf)>