

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Background of the Study

Thailand is one of the Asian countries, which produces rice. The lives of Thais have been closely bound to rice since ancient times. Most of Thai people in the rural areas do rice farming to earn their living. For them, rice is not only a function as the main food, but it is also takes a role as cultural significance. They have related rice to many aspects of their lives.

Thailand has been dominated by the military dictatorship under the regime of Khmer Rouge, which identically was in power for much of the period in 1932 to 1976 (<http://rspas.anu.edu.au/rmap/newmandala/2006/09/19/thai-village-fund-hysteria>). The life of farmers in Thailand becomes poorer and poorer at that time because of the oppression from the old political government's law. Farmers have to pay taxes and high rent to their lord rent-collector though in the silent harvest. As a consequence, they suffered from poverty and hunger because there were no food and rice. Most of the farmers could not fight against their condition. They thought that the situation happens by God's permission. The thought has made every farmer in the rural village of Thailand the victim of a deception from people who wanted to use those situations to oppress their lives.

Farmers in the rural village realize that injustice has happened in their live, but they were not brave to fight against such oppression. When the role to pay high rent was changed by the new political government's law, some of the farmers

in the rural area knew it. However, when they started to fight, most of them were being arrested and killed by their landlord.

Those entire situation is what the writer sees in *Rice Without Rain*. The author of the novel is Minfong Ho. She was born in 7 January 1951. Minfong Ho is an award-winning Chinese American writer in 1988. She has won some awards from her novel such as *Sing to the Dawn* (in 1975), *Rice without Rain* (in 1986), and *The Clay Marble* (in 1991). Her novels present realistic depictions of her native identity in Southeast Asia. Ho's writing characteristic focused on strong female protagonists who interact with their families and friends against the backdrop of real events. Ho is often recognized by her writing for the sensitivity and understanding with which she treats the feelings of her characters as well as for her depiction of Asian life and locale.

Ho's books include stories for young adult readers and middle graders as well as picture books for younger children. In all of these works, Ho does not avoid the harsher elements such as poverty and violent death, but she also weaves the theme of the stabilizing influence of family throughout her work. Minfong Ho creates a world of great beauty and gentleness, with loving family relationships and ancient customs. She also creates a world of poverty, drought, dreadful injustice, starvation, and death. Her protagonists are set between these two visions, but in that situation, they discover their pride, integrity, and determination to love the land and overcome injustice (<http://www.classzone.com/novelguides/authors/ho.cfm>).

There are several reasons why the writer takes the novel which titled *Rice Without Rain* by Minfong Ho as her study. First, the writer chooses this novel rather than any other literary works because this novel is a work that expresses human experience. In addition, this novel uses a general language rather than a flowery one, as poetry uses. Second, the writer chooses this novel because the character comes from a poor farmer family, whose problem of life is more complicated. This novel tells about a vibrant village girl whose life is caught up in the actual events of the students' movement, and she struggles to survive for her life.

*Rice Without Rain* revolves around Jinda as the main character of the novel, a courageous young Thai woman. She is seventeen years old who lives on poverty with her father, a sister, a little brother, and grandmother. Jinda's village, Maekung village, is similar with others villages in rural Thailand which suffer from the exorbitant land rent leading to the farmers poverty-stricken and landless.

A silent harvest also happens in their village. Jinda's father did not know that the new political government's law in Thailand has changed the exorbitant land rent, so farmers in Jinda's village only knew that they still must pay high rent to landlord collector. A leader of five students from Thammasat University changes Jinda's life and her family. The leader's name is Nedmanoon Angkulprasert known as Ned.

Ned has successfully provoked farmers to fight against the high rent and because of him, farmers know that the high rent is revised by the new political government in Thailand. Ned's three friends, one of them is named Sri is a student

of medicine. Sri, who brings her life-saving medicines and knowledge of how to use them, makes Jinda begin to believe that the medical doctor is more effective than any other medicine from traditional healer. At first, Jinda does not believe in Sri because Sri could not help her nephew who has suffered because of hunger who afterwards died. On the other hand, Jinda's father's hand is sore because of an accident at the field was healed by Sri's treats sterile medicine.

Ned fascinates Jinda because he helps organize rent strike in her village. She falls in love with him. Ned successfully turns out to be the member of Jinda's family. Jinda believes that Ned can help her father struggle against the government's law of paying high taxes or rent considering their village is in hunger. When Jinda's father or the Inthorn listen to Ned and resist to pay the usurious land rents, the Inthorn is jailed in Bangkok because his action angered the landlord.

Unluckily, Jinda's father is arrested for being in possession of illegal timber although it is injustice because he cuts only two logs. For the landlord only by that way he can arrested Jinda's father for resisting to pay the land rent. Jinda is very sad and dissapointed when Jinda knew that her sister Dao has a special relationship with Mr. Dusit, the man who puts Jinda's father in jail.

Jinda's struggles started when her father is arrested in Bangkok. She grows up as a stronger woman, and she struggles to find way to release her father. Ned has changed Jinda's life and mind, Ned makes her believe to follow Ned's point of view. Jinda got troubles with some women passenger in train when she is on her way to Bangkok. After, Jinda arrives in Bangkok city, she immediately

searches Ned's home where he organizes a demonstration that might help free Jinda's father.

In the process of demonstration, the military government has fought the demonstrators in a bloody massacre. After all her efforts to release her father by demonstrating in Bangkok, Jinda lost her father. Jinda's father has died because of infection. Jinda decides to return to the village to prepare her father's funeral. Jinda struggles for her family by herself to continue her life without her father and Ned.

When Jinda arrives in her village, she hopes that her sister and Ned will comeback and live together on the village though they must live in poverty. She has to work hard at the field and replaces her father's position. The miracle happens when Dao, Jinda's sister, comes back to their village because Mr. Dusit did not want her anymore. She gives birth to a little baby boy who brings the rain in their village. Jinda chooses a simpler path in life. However, she feels happy because finally she could reach out her family again though without her father, mother, her nephew, and her beloved Ned.

Through all the newfound love and personal tragedy, Jinda discovers her inner strengths and ultimately comes to terms with the value of life. The writer interested in the main character, Jinda, because she has an outstanding character. Her distress is started when her father was being jailed by the landlord. To release her father, she has made many struggles that were not common for any other poor woman. At that time, her struggles to fight the injustice and poverty

also to be one of the women can be regards as impossible. Finally, she had achieved what she wants by her choice.

## **1.2. Statements of the Problem**

After reading the novel and determining, the topic as it has already been explained above, there are at least several questions that could be raise. It is expected to make the process of arranging the analysis easier so that it will be a systematic and coherent study. There are some points that are to be disclosed within the analysis as follows:

1. How is Jinda's life oppressed by the oppressors portrayed in Minfong Ho's *Rice Without Rain*?
2. How are Jinda's struggles for a better life?

## **1.3. Objective of the Study**

Regarding the statements of the problem, the aims of the thesis' analysis will be:

1. To figure out how Jinda's life is oppressed by the oppressors portrayed in Minfong Ho's *Rice Without Rain*.
2. To scrutinize how Jinda's struggles are for a better life.

## **1.4. Scope and Limitation**

In discussing Minfong Ho's *Rice Without Rain*, there are many issues and conflicts that can be analyzed. However, the writer considers that by attempting to

analyze the whole issues, the study will become too broad. Therefore, the writer decides to scope the study on the discussion of Jinda's struggle in changing her life. It will be supported in the previous section by the discussion about the portrayal of Jinda's life. The limitation on the topic aims not to limit the analysis, but to gain a deeper analysis.

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

The significance of the study is to create awareness by reading this thesis for women that they can change their life based on the struggle they do. It also has a purpose to know how women can be surviving on their life through hard work and willingness.

Finally, the writer hopes this study can give contribution for the study of literature in general, especially for the English Department of Airlangga University.

### **1.6. Theoretical Background**

To support the analysis of the study, the writer will apply Feminist Criticism, focusing on Liberal Feminism Criticism in Elaine Storkey's *What's Right With Feminism*. In general, according to Elaine Storkey, she argues Liberals hold that freedom is a fundamental value, and that the just state ensures freedom for citizens. Liberal feminists insist on freedom for women. Liberal Feminism is divided into two parts, there are classical liberal or libertarian feminism and egalitarian liberal feminism. Classical liberal or libertarian feminism conceives of

freedom as freedom from coercive interference. It holds that women, as well as men, have a right to such freedom due to their status as self-owners. It holds that coercive state power is justified only to the extent necessary to protect the right to freedom from coercive interference. Egalitarian liberal feminism conceives of freedom as personal autonomy living a life of one's own choosing and political autonomy from the conditions under which one lives. Egalitarian liberal feminists hold that the exercise of personal autonomy depends on certain enabling conditions that are insufficiently present in women's lives, or that social arrangements often fail to respect women's personal autonomy and other elements of women's flourishing (59).

The theory will be used to criticize more about how a woman and her life are portrayed in the novel. In addition, it is used to discover that women's empowerment based on their own courage to accept the way they are as human being.

## **1.7. Method of the Study**

### **1.7.1 Technique of Data Analysis**

The technique used for data analysis is close reading technique. It is applied to explore certain data of the problem found in the work through the dialogues and event in the novel. This method is applied based on the work itself and supported by other information concerning the work.



### 1.7.2. Technique of Data Collecting

The technique of data collecting is applied in some steps. The first step is library research. In analyzing *Rice Without Rain*, library research is used to gain sufficient information about Feminist Libertarian Criticism related to how a woman and her portrayal in the novel and also the way the struggle in surviving her life which many defiance she found it which important. It is applied by collecting important information from printed materials such as books, dictionaries, and critics. Collecting information from internet is also applied to gain critics, reviews, and commentaries toward the novel including the printed materials related to the case of the struggle of a village girl in surviving her life through hard work.

### 1.8. Definition of Key Terms

Here the important terms are to be noted as in the following terminologies:

*Freedom* : state of being free or right to act or speak  
freely from a condition which oppressed.

*Feminist Libertarian Criticism*: also known as "mainstream [feminism](#),"  
asserts the equality of men and women  
through political and legal reform. It is an  
individualistic form of feminism and theory,  
which focuses on women's ability to show  
and maintain their equality through their

own actions and choices.

*Inthorn* : an initial name for someone who became as a village headman or leading the village in rural Thailand. The headman has the most width land than the other villagers in their village. Moreover, the headman has a function to protect and defense their village from the people negative spirit or peoples who wants their village.

*Survive* : an effort for continue to live or exist in hard situation.

*Struggle* : to try very hard to achieve something.

*Women's empowerment* : person with great authority that can be used to do work.