

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND RELATED STUDIES**

In this chapter, the writer will provide the main theory and the other related materials which are substantial to analyse the text. This thesis embodies a great deal of feminists' and postcolonial' ideas. It focuses on how subaltern women are oppressed by the system which was rooted from social construction of Indian women and how these subaltern women survive. More specifically, the setting of the story is India in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. That is why the most suitable theory to analyse the text will be feminist post-colonial criticism. Instead of elaborating the theory, the writer will also elaborate the life of Indian women in 1940s-1970s.

#### **2.1 Feminist Postcolonial Theory**

This thesis focuses on the characters Bim and Tara. It will compare the way social system in India oppressed each of them and the way they survive to it. Feminist Postcolonial will underlie the discussion in the rest of this thesis since it discusses the life of women's of color in decolonized country. It discussed various experiences that often happened during colonialism, such as resistance, representation, difference, critique toward Europe hegemonic discourse and the like. According to Gandhi, they try to reveal hierarchies of gender/culture/race and it stands as their refusal to binary oppositions which were resulted from constructive patriarchal/colonial authority (83). It postulates 'third-world woman'

as victim *par excellence*—the forgotten casualty of both imperial ideology, and native and foreign patriarchy (83). The implication it is that subaltern woman is vanished from the present. The strong evidence for this is the domination which is suspected to silence subaltern women. Furthermore, it is implied that, as the subalterns, women cannot voice their opinion, even if they try to, their voice would remain unheard.

The term “subaltern” was proposed by Gayatri Spivak. She is the Avalon Foundation Professor in the Humanities at Columbia University. Spivak discuss the issue about subaltern specifically subaltern women. She is influenced by “Marxism, feminism, deconstruction, postcolonial theory and cutting-edge work on globalisation (Morton 1)” in her attempt to speak cultural texts of those people who are often marginalised by dominant western. She elaborated the issue of subaltern in her famous essay entitled *Can the Subaltern Speak* published in journal *Wedge* (1985).

Subaltern Spivak’s refers to colonized people of color. Morton said that the term is preferred “to encompass a range of different subject positions which are not predefined by dominant political discourses (45)” so that “social identities and struggles (such as woman and the colonized) that do not fall under the reductive terms of ‘strict class analysis’ can be accommodated (45)“. It refers to those “of inferior rank” which is identified as the oppressed including the new immigrant, the working class, women and the postcolonial subject. In *Can the Subaltern Speak*, Spivak extended women lower class connotation from peasantry and the sub-proletariat to upper middle class. To do so, she expanded the original

definition of the subaltern developed by Ranajit Guha and others, by engaging with the historical knowledge of such disempowered women in order to include the struggles and experiences of women.

The issue of such disempowered people specifically women is brought into an essay *Can the Subaltern Speak*. In the essay, Spivak re-read to western radical mode of representation and the nineteenth-century colonial archives about widow immolation in India. She found these two became “Epistemic violence”. The term refers to the destruction of non-western ways of knowing and understanding of subaltern. The domination of western ways of understanding cause "subaltern must always be caught in translation, never truly expressing herself (Spivak 67)". Talking about Spivak’s reformulating western poststructuralist methodologies through re-reading of the nineteenth-century colonial archives about widow immolation, it could be said as her attempt to excavate historical experiences a constituency whose voices and social locations have generally been ignored by the Subaltern Studies collective, as well as by colonial and elite historical scholarship that is subaltern women.

Morover about representational system, Spivak considers it as something which is violently displaced/ silenced the figured of subaltern woman. The silencing cause we never hear subaltern women speak about them. Spivak argued it happened because they caught between tradition and modernisation. That is reflected in the way they determine life preference. We may notice their choice is actually not based on their true desire. Their action implicitly meet either indigenous norms or modern value. They are always caught in translation and

never truly expressing herself. Subaltern women experience “epistemic violence” worse than their fellow local men. As Spivak writes:

Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject constitution and object formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of ‘the third world woman’ caught between tradition and modernisation (306).

Not only do subaltern women caught between tradition and modern, their active involvement in the history of anti-British-colonial insurgency in India was not acknowledged in official history of national independence. As Spivak writes:

Within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is doubly effaced. The question is not of female participation in insurgency, or the ground rules of the sexual division of labour, for both of which there is ‘evidence’. It is, rather, that, both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow (287).

Neil Lazarus emphasises Spivak’s injunction to investigate the histories of subaltern women’s insurgency is rarely accompanied by any substantial historical research (Morton as cited on Lazarus 40). The reason for this, as Spivak points out, is because ‘the ideological construction of gender’ in the colonial archives

and the historical records of subaltern insurgency 'keeps the male dominant' (281). Against this historical erasure of subaltern women, Spivak thus traces the disappearance of the subaltern woman in order to articulate their material and cultural histories.

Spivak's argumentation about the subaltern women will help the writer to figure out the reasons and the way Bim and Tara, as the subaltern woman in the story, are being silenced by the colonial government and how they survive.

## **2.2 Indian Women in Contemporary India**

Gender inequalities in India were the result of many layers of mainstream patriarchal society including colonial masculine's power. The values attributed to ancient gender norms were often remodelled in later eras for contemporary purposes that is transforming traditional Indian women into modern women. Raman argued Indian women in contemporary time are depicted as both "mother" whose duties are analogous to giant tree; that are pouring affections and making sure all family members become well-being which is well contained and strength and as men's dependant which lays life expectancy, nutrition, health, education, pay, and other rights on male figure (x). These essentializations implicitly identify Indian women with figure which usually does self-sacrificing, has energy and become victims of gender, religious, caste, and class inequalities. The foremost consequence from the construction of Indian women is they are the subordinate; it is internalized and sustained. Because of it, it happened Male

politicians dominated to define the role and right of Indian women. They largely lay on their own assumption thus ignore women's therefore women can not speak.

In the late second half of nationalist movement until India gained its independent, Male India nationalist was so dominance. As products of missionary and government schools, elite male reformers resented comparisons between modern Europe after the Enlightenment and India's apparently feudal, moribund society. They reread Hindu-Buddhist-Jaina texts in the original or through "Orientalist" translations, and a romantic nostalgia grew apace for a bygone "golden Aryan age" when gender and caste justice prevailed in India. Through associations (samajs) and pamphlets they sought to abolish child marriage, polygamy, and the cremation of widows (satis) on the husband's pyre; and to promote female literacy and widow remarriage. After the 1857 Revolt, elite men were emboldened by promises of administrative collaboration with the Raj, but their frustrated ambitions fueled nationalist samajs that promised to rejuvenate India. Meanwhile, educated women formed groups to assist the larger sisterhood, although some authoritarian men preempted their agency (Raman 45).

Recent critics argue that male reformers were too preoccupied with elite women's customs to consider the pressing problems of lower-class women. As the elite, they filtered the benefits of modernity from themselves to women and the low castes, so that women became the objects of their reforming gaze and channels for India's regeneration. Moreover, critics point out that male reformers wished to educate elite girls by reaffirming their roles as "good wives and good mothers," an idea that was extended to their work as brave "mothers of the

nation'' (and its men). In this highly political environment, missionary, government, and nationalist schools emphasized women's domestic and reproductive importance, since patriarchy demanded that men seek outside employment through a Western secular education. Nationalists did not try to educate their women for jobs but to maintain cultural stability in the midst of rapid social change. The exception was the widow who became an ideal resource to teach other (Raman 119).

Considering that native women in India owe subaltern status, they are undermined by colonialist masculine's power, local king's power, India nationalist's project, and by rising global state in the contemporary India. It happened that even more women in India could obtain education and obtain occupation, their choices are still limited and their wages less than men after the independence. However, it because the deep rooted belief that women are subordinate is still supported by interpretation of modern and tradition values.

There were growing debates within male India Nationalist and British government in teaching Indian women. According to Raman, Colonial officials and a growing elite class of Indian reformers drew upon Orientalist translations of Indian texts, missionary accounts of Hinduism, colonial statistics, and the summations of Western anthropologists about tribal and matrilineal societies in India (xiv). The battle was transmitted through educational education till the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century along with the raising of Male India Nationalist struggle for unity democratic Independence India. Since 1920 women in India appeared as new women. As subaltern women, Indian women posed as the Object of the two

masculine's power to shape. This practice cause the designating policy could not accommodate the need of women in India.

The personal laws of Hindhu community in India refer to India Hindu family laws. It was colonial construction which existed until 1950.. This law controlled and regulated social relation between men women, including marriage, divorce, maintenance, guardianship of children, adoption, succession and inheritance and as such concerns women intimately, in the 'private' sphere of the family. Marriage is virtually universal. Its application often causes sexual inequity. Women are positioned as subordinate to and dependent on male kin while the men are positioned as the head of the family (Mukhopadhyay 5). The senior male of the household— including father, grandfather, or uncle— is recognized as family head while his wife regulates the tasks assigned to female family members (Kuiper 46). Male occupy higher status than females. Boys usually get many attentions while girls are relatively neglected.

The common tendency happened in this era was Indian women self was regulated by the norms proposed by social reformist, British imperialist, and India Nationalist. Each of them had their own arguments. British imperialist saw Indian women as degraded moral; Missionaries had the same argument for their religion but they deserved for redemption therefore they were taught Christianity; while India nationalist considered they should be brought to their nature as mother of India but they also insist Indian women should adopt modernity so that they became moral superior since. All of them share one important point of view Indian women that was Indian women were inferior to both male imperialist and



Indian male. Even though there were female white feminists who fought for them, it was likely that they affirm those male opinions.

### 2.3 Review of Related Studies

The study of subaltern women's resistance toward discrimination has been previously conducted in 2009 by the student of English Department Airlangga University, Reza Rizky Azizah. In the study, she analyzes female protagonist Nin Toer's novel *Nyai Ontosoroh*, Sanikem. She analyzes the oppressions experienced by Sanikem as subaltern women and how Sanikem reacts.

The story of subaltern woman in Toer's work is a critic toward racial discrimination or patriarchal system against subaltern woman. The story mainly focuses on how Javanese feudalism and Dutch patriarchy disadvantage subaltern woman named Sanikem. It also elaborates how Sanikem reacts.

Sanikem first appeared as subaltern women who did not recognize patriarchy she experienced as the oppressions. She passively legitimates the belief that men were naturally superior to women. Sanikem was undermined with Javanese and Dutch patriarchal.

Sanikem was fully identified with Javanese patriarchal and was influenced with familism ideology. She tried to fit with the ideal image of Javanese women, which actually so undermining. She conducted herself as 'house wife'. She mostly spent time in the house and did not resist for restriction of working. Moreover, that Sanikem holds Javanese belief 'men's words are god's words' cause her to obey her father, the decisive figure in Javanese culture.

Sanikem also undermined by Dutch colonizer. She was undermined by her Dutch master. This time Sanikem also did no resistant and take it as her faith. However, she fight to win

Compared to the study which the writer of the thesis will do, both studies discuss subaltern women experience by using Feminist Postcolonial Theory with the link to Spivak's *Can the Subaltern Speak*. However, this study differs from Azizah's because it compares the experience between two female characters. Also, the characters which will be discussed in this study have access to education while Azizah's Sanikem has no access into education.