

Conference Paper

Feminism in Pramoedya Ananta Toer's Novel *Gadis Pantai*

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Abstract

This study deals with the life of woman in the novel *Gadis Pantai* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer. The purposes of this study are to analyze and described feminism in Pramoedya Ananta Toer's novel using theory of feminism proposed by Clark (1990). Feminism is then a belief that women should be equal to men and now are not, and that it is also any actions, especially organized, that promote women's rights to move towards equality with men. Feminism addresses economic, social, political and cultural disparities of power and rights. The study focused on rights of living allowance and nursing children. Qualitative method is applied in this study supported by Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 59). The source of data in this study consists of two types, i.e. primary data and secondary data. The primary data is the novel by Pramoedya Ananta Toer and the secondary data are documents, script and other relevant sources. The data are collected by using content analysis. The result of this study shows that feminism theory on living allowance and nursing children are clearly reflected in the novel by the character of Gadis Pantai.

Keywords: feminism, living allowance, nursing children

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1. Introduction

Pramoedya Ananta Toer was born in Blora, in central Java, on February 6, 1925, when Indonesia was still a colony of the Netherlands. He was one of the nine children in the family. Pramoedya's father was an educator and a member of a pro-independence group called Budi Otomo. Pramoedya Ananta Toer is a literary maestro who became one of the old classes of literature. His works have been well known by all circles at that time and he had received the Nobel Prize for his works after he died. Pram's name, in the process of success he experienced in and out of prison on suspicion of his works that inspire society smells of communism, Pram was considered as a rebel. Most of his works also depict the realities of the people at that time, namely priyayi and women. One of the novels that raises about women issues is *Gadis Pantai*.

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Pramoedya Ananta Toer's *Gadis Pantai* was published in Jakarta by Hasta Mitra in 2000. This novel tells about the life of a young girl named Gadis Pantai who was born in a fishing village in Central Java, Rembang. Gadis Pantai is a sweet girl. She is sweet enough to captivate a magnifying local student, a Javanese who is working on (administration) Dutch. She was taken as a magnifying wife and became what is known as Bendoro Putri, a woman who serves the "needs" of sex of Bendoro's until he decides to marry a woman that has the same class or his equality. She slept with him, helping to manage and govern the *Karesidenan* complex, pavilion, cages and even a mosque. The marriage gave her prestige in her village because she is seen to have increased in rank. But this does not last long. She sank back into the ground. This novel, is narrated with a tender young girl, "*Gadis Pantai*" really having lost everything, no husband, house, kids (or rather deprived her magnifying taken Java to remain in Rembang) and no job. "*Gadis Pantai*" is so shy to get back to her village so that she rotates towards the south, to the small town of Blora. This story represents the life of a woman to the defense of women's rights and liberties and tells of the loss of morality of a poor woman who wants to get her right as a wife to earn a living and to nurture a child even if they become oppressed and live with low social stratum.

The concept is interesting particularly when applied in literary works written by male writers. Feminism then is also seen on men perspective. *Gadis Pantai* is one of Indonesian novels written by Pramoedya Anantya Toer which discusses feminism. The story is about a girl, whose name is *Gadis Pantai*, living in Rembang in the beginning of the twentieth century. She is the symbol of ordinary or laymen. She suffered when Bendoro, the symbol of noble- men, took her as his wife.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Feminism

One of the distinctive notions of feminism is already proposed by Clark (1990), in which he claims that feminism in general speaks what the woman does within literary criticism and other perspectives.

In general, feminism is a movement that stands against oppression and injustice; and specifically those oppression and injustice are usually exercised on women. Rebalancing the standing of the sexes in social life is termed feminism. This notion derives from a highlighted point that men and women have been treated unequally in society. And a desire to change such situation gives a way to feminism to emerge. Equality does not merely

mean equality under a certain norm or law but also mean philosophical and social equality as every individual has its own standing and every individual that has raised by women must how to treat women respectfully. (Clark, 1990: 112)

Friedan (2000: 12) notes that there are four types of feminism as follow.

1. Liberal Feminism: Works within the structure of society observing the roles of women in all aspects of society.
2. Radical Feminism: Domination of women over men.
3. Marxist Feminism: Oppression of women owing to capital system.
4. Cultural Feminism: Eulogy of women as one of the important elements nature.

In modern societies, the phrase 'human rights' refers to a set of basic civil liberties that should be available to everyone in a democratic country. Although the justification for human rights is essentially ethical, they are almost always also aspired to as legal rights (Almond, 2010: 261).

The first generation of rights were civil and political and were developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by English political philosophers such as Locke (1632–1704) who claimed the rights to life, liberty and property. These rights are negative in the sense that they prohibit interference with rights holders' freedom. The second generation of human rights consisted mainly of social, economic and cultural rights. They are positive rights entitling the rights holder to, for example, education, medical care and food. The third generation of human rights – contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (the Declaration) – was adopted by the United Nations in 1948.

2.2. Right for living allowance

According to Association of Prince Edward Island, Inc. woman rights after separation are as follows:

1. Support for your spouse

Spouses have a legal duty to financially support each other while they are living together.

2. Child custody and visiting rights

Parents of a child, married or not, are joint custodians of their children while living together. Each has equal right to custody of the children if they decide to live apart.

3. Property

The Family Law Act is the law that deals with property of married persons. This includes the house, furniture, money, investments, and car.

2.3. Right for nursing children

Agreement on what constitutes adequate care and nourishment for a newborn baby may be far easier to reach than on what constitutes an adequate education for an older child (Bainham, 2005: 102).

According to an alternative scheme proposed by Bevan (1989), children's rights consist of two broad categories.

1. Protective rights: Included in this category are children's rights to nurture, love, care, and so on, as well as protection from abuse and neglect. These protective rights derive from children's innate dependence and vulnerability and their need for nurture, love and care (Fortin, 2003: 17).
2. Assertive rights: Echoing some of the claims of the so-called child liberationists (who generally argue for children to be given all the rights that adults enjoy)

3. Research Method

This research was library research that used qualitative method to analyze the data from the novel entitled *Gadis Pantai* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer. The object of the study is the feminism aspect of the main character named *Gadis Pantai* and there are two dominant points directly concerned with the main object of the study. The next steps taken were collecting, identifying and understanding fully the concepts and meanings as well as the feminism aspects. Various sources out of the novel are also taken to better analysis. The qualitative data are considered to be the rough materials researchers collect from the world they are studying; they are the particulars that from the basis of analysis (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992: 59).

The source of the data in this research consists of two types. They are primary data and secondary data. Khotari states "The *primary data* are those which collected afresh and for the first time, and thus happen to be original in character. The *secondary data*,

on the other hand, are those which have already been collected by someone else and which have already been passed through the statistical process" Khotari, 1990: 95). In this research, the primary data is the novel *Gadis Pantai* written by Pramoedya Ananta Toer. The secondary data is documents, script and other relevant sources that are related to the topic.

The data collection procedures divided into some steps. The first step is the researcher observed the novel. Then, the researcher read the novel. Next, the researcher was searching information that is related to the novel and the topic of this study also. After that, the researcher underlined all the data needed are collected which are right living allowance and nursing children.

To analyzed right living allowance and nursing children, the researcher used content analysis as technique of analyzing the data. Khotari states "Content-analysis consists of analysing the contents of documentary materials such as books, magazines, newspapers and the contents of all other verbal materials which can be either spoken or printed" (Khotari, 1990:110).

4. Discussion

4.1. Living allowance

"Gadis Pantai" as a Bendoro's wife has an obligation to serve and obey her husband. It can be seen that *"Gadis Pantai"* is not being a wife, but just a maid who must fulfill all Bendoro's needs. Serve all Bendoro's needs, including his sexual needs. (Pramoedya, 2000: 211)

As a mother, *"Gadis Pantai"* was portrayed as a strong woman mentally. It was seen when she was pregnant of her baby girl without support from her husband and family. Nevertheless she does all the process as unusual, without her husband and family support. She is not regarded as a member of Bendoro's family as she is not given rights to make a decision on finance; or in other words *Gadis Pantai* is never given some money in the form of living allowance, though she never feels hungry in the house. But the right for allowance is gone. (Pramoedya, 2000: 211-212)

Bendoro's was disappointed, he expelled *"Gadis Pantai"* and told her to look for a better husband. Although *"Gadis Pantai"* was expelled by bringing all the jewelry and clothes given by Bendoro, but she could not carry her baby girl. As a mother, she was very sad and disappointed. But she could not do anything besides just giving breast milk to her baby for the last time and

as a good husband Bendoro did not give "*Gadis Pantai*'s right for her living allowance". (Pramoedya, 2000: 219)

The above quotations show that *Gadis Pantai* is never regarded of her existence in the house. She is like a slave in the house and there is no reward of any kind for all her services. It is distressing to see *Gadis Pantai* claiming to be a feminist turning all heterosexual relationships in which she does not earn a salary at least close to that of her partner into a simple sex-for-cash transaction, one in which her man has the reasonable act of sex. But unluckily she never receives anything worthy of respect from her husband. She is actually exploited sexually by her husband and such an act is regarded normal in the tradition of that time. She is a concubine, giving her body for the sexual satisfaction of her man, not her husband. She has to wait until her man, Bendore, gets an appropriate woman for his legal wife. And during that time she is not given any right since she is regarded only as a slave.

Apart from all the suffering she obtains, *Gadis Pantai* has also proved herself to be strong. Growing up she is very quiet, shy, timid, lonely and sad. However she wants to put it up; she patiently bears all these things. She rarely speaks up. She never says what she feels, whether someone hurts her feelings or she is being yelled at or someone asks her opinion. All these things are routinely encountered when she becomes the maid in Bendoro's house. Even then it is hard for her to communicate especially with her family. She just does not want to deal with them. She is trying to work on this and is not perfect yet but getting slowly better. Without any money given, *Gadis Pantai* has proved herself to be a strong woman. Her strength is triggered by her hardship in her life.

4.2. Nursing children

After the baby was three and a half months, the girl's father came to pick up *Gadis Pantai*" was divorced by Bendoro. Nothing would deter Bendoro power, and thus habit. When she brought forth, The experiment wife would be divorced, and the wife would be replaced with other experiments wife before he got a real wife, a wife who came from a family gentry. *Gadis Pantai* was not permitted by Bendoro to nurse her baby girl. (Pramoedya, 2000: 218-219)

She must leave her house without carrying her baby girl and she could give the permission form Bendoro to nurse her baby girl. Her father was called to pick her up from the village because she had been divorced by her husband. How a "*Gadis Pantai*"'s heart was broken because she had to leave her child

alone without supervision and could not devote her affection. (Pramoedya, 2000: 219-220)

"*Gadis Pantai*" gave her baby breast food for the last time. After that "*Gadis Pantai*" would be out from Bendoro's house and never got nursing her baby girl again. (Pramoedya, 2000: 220)

The experiences of *Gadis Pantai* reflected in this study amount to violations of human rights, which unequivocally recognize the role of the tradition at that time in ensuring access to affordable and high-quality child care so that she can structure her life with autonomy and dignity, and so her child can fulfill its potential. She is expelled by her man, Bendoro and she is not given any chance to take care of her child as she is not allowed to bring along her child.

She has to lose her child and this is a distressing and sorrowful sight. Actually Bendoro has acted inhumanly towards *Gadis Pantai*. No one could imagine how the feeling of a mother is, when she is taken away from her child; but that is the reality to be faced by *Gadis Pantai*. And this is an exact picture of violation against woman which becomes the issues in feminism.

5. Conclusions

Gadis Pantai is a novel that shows the understanding of feminism theoretical knowledge about women's responsibilities to face life through *Gadis Pantai*. The researcher analyzes the rights of living allowance and nursing children by implementing feminism theory. After analyzing the novel, the researcher points some conclusions in this section.

Gadis Pantai conveys the react of woman towards the oppressions which is reflected in the presentation of female major character, "*Gadis Pantai*". Her manner, action and thought show the idea of being female in the old Javanese tradition.

The portrayal of female character, "*Gadis Pantai*" shows that women should be submissive to her husband. She must accept her fate and she must play her role based on the oriental values. However "*Gadis Pantai*" does not get her rights well from her man Bendoro. As a maid, she is under oppression by her man.

From "*Gadis Pantai*", it can be observed that her portrayal can lead to idea of woman oppressed by her rights in *Gadis Pantai*. The novel elucidates the hardship that woman must endure in old Javanese tradition. Thus, it tells how man treats woman and how woman should behave and performs. Firstly, woman is regarded to be obedient to

her husband. She must accept her role being a wife who must follow her husband's command. In the marriage life, woman's position.

It is not as the partner of her husband in sharing life but as the servant satisfying lust. She must be able to sacrifice her life to her family. She is just only being an obedient wife. Next, the woman is considered as important as long as she gives her husband. Having a daughter is not expected in old Javanese tradition since a girl is judged worthless since she will be a burden and expense for her family. Even she wants to rout it, she cannot do it. Thus, through *Gadis Pantai* Pramoedya' wants to picture the condition of being a woman in old Javanese tradition that never gets real rights in living allowance and nursing children.

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