

ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL FEMINISM AGAINST NOVEL BANAT RIYADH BY RAJA AL SANAE

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Abstract

Social Feminism expressed by Marxists showed the class gap and the importance of power to women. It shifted to a more severe realm in all aspects of women's lives. Novel Banat Riyadh gave an overview of four Saudi Arabian girls who sought to awaken the elements of feminism and reformation for women through the expressions of literary works that became the center of world attention because the facts revealed about the social reality of women was different from what has been understood by the world community today. Therefore, this article aims at finding out kinds of social feminism elements captured by the author in the story as represented by the four characters in his work. The method used in this present research was qualitative with semiotic approach that serves for more complete and detailed research results, using the novel as the primary data and as secondary data are in the forms of book and other scientific works. The result showed that the elements of social feminism took place in the characters in Al Sanae's novel with different backgrounds, education, and family rules that restrict and imprison women, dress mode which was considered a reflection of injustice and inequality for women and work structure relation with reality of Arab women social life.

Keywords: *Social Feminism, Saudi Women, Novel Literature, Social Reality*

Abstrak

Feminisme Sosial yang diungkapkan oleh kaum Marxis menunjukkan kesenjangan kelas dan pentingnya kekuasaan bagi perempuan. Faham ini bergeser ke ranah yang lebih luas dalam semua aspek kehidupan perempuan. Novel Banat Riyadh memberikan ikhtisar tentang empat gadis Arab Saudi yang berupaya membangkitkan unsur feminisme dan reformasi bagi perempuan melalui ekspresi karya sastra yang menjadi pusat perhatian dunia karena fakta yang terungkap tentang realitas sosial perempuan berbeda dengan apa yang telah dipahami oleh komunitas dunia saat ini. Oleh karena itu, artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui jenis-jenis elemen feminisme sosial yang ditangkap oleh penulis dalam cerita sebagaimana diwakili oleh empat karakter dalam karyanya. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah kualitatif dengan pendekatan semiotik yang berfungsi untuk hasil penelitian yang lebih lengkap dan rinci, menggunakan novel sebagai data primer dan sebagai data sekunder dalam bentuk buku dan karya ilmiah lainnya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa unsur-unsur feminisme sosial terjadi dalam karakter yang ada dalam novel Al Sanae dengan latar belakang yang berbeda, pendidikan, dan aturan keluarga yang membatasi dan memenjarakan perempuan, mode pakaian yang

dianggap sebagai cerminan ketidakadilan dan ketidaksetaraan bagi perempuan dan hubungan struktur kerja dengan realitas kehidupan sosial perempuan Arab

Kata Kunci: *Feminisme sosial, wanita Saudi, Novel, Realitas Sosial.*

1. Introduction

Literary works have their own powers that are poured in words and can express a person's personality and environmental circumstances. Some works of literature are delivered in high or figurative language, requiring strong reasoning and interpretation in order to understand the intention of the expression in the literary work. In contrast, some other literary works are conveyed in a language that is easy to understand so that the messages contained in them can be understood and delivered properly.

As for one of the literature that is easy to understand, but can reveal the existence of women in the environment is *Banat Riyadh* novel by Raja Alsanae. This novel had a very strong background on the role of women and their rights in good life that made them happy and vice versa, making them suffered. What was conveyed in the novel was expressed in an interactive and communicative way that put forward the feelings, mind, science and intellectual person in analyzing matters related to women and the environment of his life. Precisely, the author of this novel sought to uncover the veil that had been closed about women in Riyadh.

What was contained in the novel was always begun with a piece of poem, a piece of the Qur'anic verse, or a well-known lyric can illustrate the content and be a reference to the ideas expressed in the novel. This was characteristic in a literary work and could be strongly considered to be the justification of what the speaker had to say in each of his emails as outlined in *Banat Riyadh's* novel.

Banat Riyadh tells about four Riyadh girls; they are Qamrah, Michelle, Shedim and Lumeis who had the experience and background of each and did associations at the home of a woman named Ummu Nuwair for various knowledge and experience like sister (Alsanea, 2007,p.22). The novel showed its identity by mingling with the development of its age and culture so that it could be analyzed in various aspects, especially in this case feminism. This novel can be interpreted through types of literature, environment of the autor that may influence the creation of the novel and setting of time. This novel it seemed also to reveal that women were perceived as incomplete creatures; women became commodities or goods that could be owned by anyone who wanted and could be exploited (Ibid, 2004, p.129).

The facts and realities of religious values, cultures and practices in the community were clearly revealed in the novel that reflected their injustice to women. Therefore, a high degree of readability conveyed through language satire, local flexibility and important intertektual games that could create power and novelty were present in this novel so as to provide insights into the reality of women in Arab society (Flotow, 2017, p.106). In fact, according to them, women also had similar things in the system and other people's lives. The concept of equality of rights contained in feminism related to rights and justice for them. This seemed to indicate male dominance over women and vice versa, the lagging of women in all aspects of life, including education and community activities(Emzir, 2018, p.198).

Educational activities that conflicted with social reality about society occurred in one of the characters of the novel, Qamrah who was willingness to discontinue her study and she then followed her husband to America, although she felt doubt and uncomfortable with the reality she faced. Similarly, social reality that required women to submit to the husband had

been experienced by her, despite the fact he often abandoned her wife that he did not give her wife's right.

The speakers in this novel were trying to express their different ideas to the general public about the reality of Saudi Arabia on the basis of the view and the modern thinking it is considered unreasonable, even seemingly ridiculous. Therefore, they struggled to change the views or ways of thinking of the people, especially all things that were good and bad for women, that was implied by their expressions that women were entitled to themselves, independent of men, had rights and justice and were subject to change according to his wishes within the social community.

The woman's reality was related to the social reality and the existence of women in cultural understanding and sought to express and gave understanding to the general public the meaning of being female (Utaminingsih, 2017, p.31-32). This fact was revealed in the speakers' words about love, oppression of women, homosexuality and Saudi conservative views on Islamic doctrines (Syahril, 2014, p.83). Thus, it was shown in the literary texts of the novel as one of the media to buzz and voice aloud the wishes, needs and rights of women. In any case, women had their own activities and initiatives to fight for their rights and interests, as in the content of this novel (Rokhmansyah, 2014, p.129-130).

What the four girls said seemed to show the social faces of Saudi women who had no freedom. It was disclosed by Hamdan that women In Saudi had limited educational services, ownership in business and are tied to socio-cultural Saudi Arabia (Hamdan, 2005, p.47-55).

The female image of feminism and socio-culture was expressed on the basis of the division of women into two groups as mentioned in the novel, namely, first: women who had been trained in culture and religious ways had never been in touch with outside influences that were contrary to the values or religious teachings. Second: women who grew up in an environment that was considered relatively similar to the first group but have the tendency, expectation, and dreamt to be released from the shackles of a moment and live in a more loose or broad culture.

Female depiction showed that feminism was a perspective used to analyze and understand the life of women as a whole from all aspects of life which was nothing but important and necessary (Sadli, 2010, p.75). Therefore, the aspect of feminism in the novel, as French was concerned, suggested that the best of men and women were those who value love and tenderness, the tendency and willingness to share with each other, maintain each other and the sense of belonging and status in life (Indris, 2010, p.120).

Based on the above explanation, the existence of feminism was fairly condensed and important to disclose, because the speakers in the novels likely insisted on forming opinions, even liably moving the people of Saudi Arabia, especially women, to truly literate on the times and created a strong impetus to defend and achieve rights and justice for women in their socio-culture.

Feminists had come to realize that there were many cases of injustice that occurred in families and society. However, the analysis and understanding of the indicators were different (Muslikhati, 2004, p.31). Therefore, Bernice Lott (American Psychologist) assumed the following:

“Feminist scholarship and empirical research..have particular qualities that distinguish it from other research...in its choice of problems and ultimate objectives” (year, page?).

According to Utaminingsih (2017), feminism was a study of women's movement on the opposition to the division of labor that set men as the ruler of the public sphere, while women as housewives who worked without wages in domestic domain so as to bear the entire workload for 24 hours in family life (Utaminingsih, 2017, p.31). This understanding was a traditional marxist feminism based on the phenomenon when it made women like commodity goods that could be utilized by anyone, especially the men.

Marxist feminism emphasized the element of women's participation as a whole in implementing the production and elimination of oppression that occurred for women (Indris, 2010, p.119). This indicated that there was an element of women's movement and struggle to realize their goals for equality, position and freedom as men (Clegg, 2002, p.232).

The occurrence of feminism in the socio-cultural society underwent a process in the historical analysis that had to be thoroughly examined the relationship of the position of women with others (Sim, 2006, p.136). So the existence of this feminism theory sought to stimulate social change that was contradicted to things that are contrary to women in socio-cultural life (Sadli, 2010, p.77).

Juliah's research explained the existence of feminism could be seen through some elements such as behavioral feminism, Marxist thought and feminism. Behavioral elements were seen from the attitude of women to the socio-cultural environment and position or position in the middle of society. While the element of thought in the form of a person's view of the feminism symptoms that occur. The element of feminism formed the role of women against the prevailing power system that was considered oppressing the lower classes, namely women.

However, the reality of feminism that occurred in the midst of society was returned to how ideology runs or functions to, according to individual understanding of socio-cultural practices (Tijani, 2009, p.6-7). This thus showed the scope of feminism in general as mentioned by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) as follows:

First, subjectivity, which showed that feminism research had covered all aspects of life so that it could be analyzed by qualitative methods. This was applied to the subjectivity and experience experienced by women in their socio-cultural life. Second, the relationship and interaction, ie the scope that could be analyzed based on the social interaction applied between men and women or related tasks and their work.

Third, Movement, organization and social structure. This scope related to race, social class, and sexual orientation that could be observed the movement and reality in the field so that it could be analyzed how people respond to the problems that occurred. Fourth, the policy, that was, the existence of feminism analysis was not very influential in policy, but could be connected between the influence to the implementation of policy involving status, occupation, and position of woman and man (Karim, 2014).

Feminism was not the only thought in response to the evolving problems of correcting, supporting and denying the phenomenon. For there were several feminism thoughts, including: first liberal feminism, which was to focus and fight for attention on freedom between women and men in opportunity and rights. Second, feminism made, the existence of women provides the freedom for him to change himself in terms of lifestyle, experience and interaction and communication with men. Third, marxist / socialist feminism described the low position of women in men in terms of power, economic, social and political and patriarchal analysis that made women only low and commodity. Fourth, theological feminism, that the community system was built on the ideology, religion, and community norms, explained that the oppression of women is due to the doctrine and ideology of society which position women was subordinated (Wiyatni, 2012, p.12).

According to Engels (year?), achieving a balanced state in women could be realized if internal or domestic problems were lifted and transformed into social affairs (Muslikhati, 2004, p.34). But the socialist feminism explained that the subordination of women was very complicated to explain because of the oppression and tension everywhere.

Based on the analysis of this feminist thought, the existence of literary works was positioned as an object to image and interpret the polemic and women's issues contained in it. Literary works based on the analysis of feminism were not intended to examine and criticize women or their authors, but view the literary work as a form of encouragement and awareness that sex was closely related to culture, literature and life that caused the gap between men and women (Emzir, 2018, p.197).

This showed what was contained in a literary work was one form of activity and own initiative to fight for the rights and interests of women. Therefore, the phrases in the novel were works of feminism that had the main characteristics of the existence of incompatibility, even anger to men, the creation of a culture that many oriented to the interests of men (Warsiman, 2015, p.32). It was also questioning the way people view in a literary work that was very likely to be patriarchal as it says that all forms of interests and justice were only owned by men alone. Thus, making fiction and fact literary works that expressed reality by speakers who had reciprocal, dynamics, and dialectics (Norhayati, 2016, p.296).

2. Research Methods

This research used qualitative research method. This research probed the issues related to women issues particularly feminism which seen from from insider perspective, using interpretative framework and relates to social context with natural setting (Lapan, 2011, p.2). Biklen and Bogdan defined it as research procedure which produce descriptive data in form of verbal, non-verbal and people behavior whom are observed (Bogdan, 1992, p.21-22).

In collecting the data, this qualitative study used the novel *Banat Riyadh* as the object of the study that the present researcher made it as the primary data. The secondary data is going to be collected from internet, books, laptop which may produce and support the study to look for and collect informations that involve the study such as journal, theory and others.

The approach to complete this study was semiotic. Semiotic is the general theory that attempts to sepecificy the general logical features of signs and the similarities and differences between the great variety of forms they can take (Clare, 1990, p.1). The semiotic function in this approach was not only related to signals and symbols to obtain the desired meaning, but it could be said to be a sign of meaningful communication (Parera, 2004, p.41).

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Result

The results showed that family and education backgrounds influenced the view and thought of the four girls in Raja AlSanae's novel. As for Lumesi Jadawy was a Hijaz girl and since childhood grew up and studied in Riyadh. She took the Faculty of Corporate Administration, Lumeis in medical school and Michelle preferred to deepen accounting materials. While Qamrah preferred the stories and thoughts of the characters for taking high education in the field of history.

Such a high-minded background dictated an advanced and free-thinking mindset that saw the outer world of Saudi Arabia and was inspired and even encouraged to practice it and discourse it to Saudi women, although in practice some of it was ridiculed and awaited news of importance in e-mail by Saudi society.

The social feminism also occurred within the scope of the family experienced by Qamrah. She was bound by family tradition and family desire to marry her to Rashid so that Qamrah's school was cut off. In fact, according to him, women had the right to determine their wishes without any limitations that prevented them.

It was expressed as if women were just an object and treated unequally by men. Thus she kept accepting the family decisions even though in truth there was a great contradiction. However she could not do anything and just accepted what his husband ordered, such as moving to America.

The movement of feminism occurred in some of the literary works of the novel. The authors encourage Saudi women to call for feminism even though the feminist movement had completely failed to overthrow the authoritarian regime and authoritarian rule in Arabia.

The result, what the author wrote had opened the horizons, insights and facts of Saudi women who were considered left behind, both in terms of dress, thinking, societal and life. So what was written through the emails simultaneously became the main reference for the Arab community at that time.

In other facts, the novel showed that the power of men within patriarchal society was due to the needs of getting attention in order to avoid women abuse, as experienced by Qamrah. It was disclosed to grant the rights between women as wives and men as husbands.

3.2 Discussion

The appointment of feminism in Banat Riyadh's novel was strongly dominated by four girls who had different backgrounds, both in terms of family, education and environment. This made their views different from that of the average girl in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, they were trying to expose the social-cultural and individual or domestic self-sufficiency of women to be motivated, even reformed for Saudi women who had been in a pool of backwardness and injustice. The injustice to women was revealed by Qamrah as follows:

“my people, women were nothing more than a point of submission and submission. The residents of substations were limited” (Alsanea, 2007, p.12).

The above phrase showed the private areas of women who had been shackled in limits, both in social, political and family terms. They were only regarded as complementary to men who were no more subject to the cultural and dogmatic rules of religion to be at the bottom of their class status. Therefore, in the view of Qamrah there was no difference between the past, present and future.

Therefore, the stagnation and social disparity of women actually occurred in the Qamrah who must give himself to the level below the man who became her husband. This showed that Saudi women, represented through Qamrah, were considered to be involved in interaction and communication with the community and the most beautiful position they experience.

In contrast, the narrative indicated that a western lifestyle was preferred over the lifestyle of Saudi women in general. This indicated that the movements and efforts made by Qamrah and others based on King Alsanae's novel did not to fall into the confusion of social-cultural relations and Islamic traditions which they thought have weaknesses could not provide space and justice for women.

However, what Qamrah discloses was Islamic doctrine that a wife should follow a husband. However, the reality experienced by her as inversely proportional, because the husband did not pay attention to her like a wife caused by research tasks and other tasks.

Therefore, this movement in addition to changing the mindset and socio-cultural behavior of girls in Saudi Arabia, as well as rebelled against the Islamic tradition that had been adopted conservatively by the whole society of Saudi Arabia.

In addition, the depiction implemented by Alsanae in this novel showed that women had the right to choose for themselves and what was best for them. This happened to Qamrah who had dropped out of school due to marriage and had to move to America to follow her husband.

The other description that could break Saudi Arabia's tradition of dressing was depicted in the clothes worn by women traveling with friends for a meeting at Michelle's house. The designation of different dress traditions that serve to mobilize Saudi women not to be left behind by men, had equal rights in dressing and absorption of outside cultures was revealed in the following sentence:

“The girl was wearing pants with many pockets that hid her female side. He also wore a flax that covered the sign, as well as dark glasses that protected him from the sun. Lumeis wore a white dress that accentuated his height and his athletic body. Meanwhile other friends came in a coat-like outfit with a cloth that covered part of their faces and showed their eye's eye”

The comparison between four girls in novel and other arabic ladies led to an impulse and the impression that the traditions of his friends in dressing were still relatively traditional and limited to ancestral traditions that seem to be unfair and the boundaries between men and women in dress.

Next is on the relation of the work structure and the revelation of social life. On this issue, the literary masterpiece of King Alsanae overturned the fact that so far it was understood by the wider community that Saudi women seem to be closed and follow their traditions that had been in progress though.

In other words, Alsanae classifies facts about Saudi women into an outmoded, unfashionable group, impressed selling themselves to power, so she thought it created imbalances, injustices, inequalities and tensions continuously. Then on forms of symbolic violence revealed in the novel. Alsane revealed that the limitations were dominated by the doctrines and traditions that had been expanding about women's socio-cultural practices. This also justified what the government wanted as a ruler to control the social behavior of women. This meant that symbolic power provides pressure and discrimination to women in their daily activities.

But what was disclosed was against the tradition, then got scorn from some of them as follows:

“You did not deserve to be taught as a Najd woman, you made sure to hold a grudge and tried to defame Saudi women”.

The reply letter from this reader was addressed to the fashionable Shedim who possessed a more modern character than other Saudi women. Therefore, the Shedim story could inspire other literary works to analyze the sides that may attract other researchers.

4. Conclusion

Based on the above descriptions, the social feminism of the four Saudi Arabian girls lied in several aspects: (1) family and educational backgrounds that led to different ways of

thinking and thinking;(2) education and family rules that made them shackled to express interests and desires; (3) the reform of dressing mode for Saudi Arabian women that needed to be moved (4) the relation of work structures and the reality of social life that was very relevant to the life of feminism; and (5) the existence of symbolic forms of violence expressed through the words in the novel.

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