



WOMEN CHARACTER IN ACEH 21st CENTURY NOVELS

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ABSTRACT

This study is related to the women characters in novels of 21st century. The research questions are (1) how to the Acehnese litterateur express the acehnese women's characters in their opuses; (2) how is the Acehnese women characters in 21st century novels?. The source of the research is a novels that were written by Acehnese people which narrate about Acehnese women personage and published in 21st century (published between 2001-2016). This study was conducted to describe the character aspects of women that indicate the women-self-elements that is based on the acehnese women' attitude in the novels. This study used qualitative method along with sociological literature approach. The result of this study shown that the acehnese litterateur explain their life experiences in the story so the women character is considerably strong and hearth-touching which is affected by political momentum and tsunane disaster that have carved them to be ambitious, strong, stable and brave. All of the women in the story have became more gentle, honest, and obedient. They kept their well mannered as a women that is reflected from strict islamic culture. Eventhough there are some of the women character who have impolite attitude, it did not destroy the good image of the Acehnese women who were holding to the teaching of their religion and tradition.

Key Words: *Character, Aceh Women, and Aceh Novel*

INTRODUCTION

Character is a human nature that affects their whole mind and attitude, nature and their behavior individually. According to Nurgiyantoro (2002: 165) character can be defined either as the actor of the story or physique. Human have different unique character so each individual has his/her own characteristics during his/her interaction with other individuals.

Sumardjo & Saini (1985: 64) stated that the quality of a story is determined by the skill of the writer to construct the charracters that seems

alive to the reader. If the character in the story is "weak", we cannot deny that the story will be "weak" as well. Each of the characters suppose to have his/her own personality which is based on his/her past, education, origin, and his/her life experiences. A talented writer is skillful in exposing the whole background of someone's story event in one scene by inferring the background in the actor way of speaking, reacting to an event, dressing and many other a verbal and non verbal actions.

Although that they tend to be less important than men and be underestimated, women are very interesting figures to be discussed since they have a very huge role in the society. Herman (2010: 3) stated that the role of women can not be separated from the life itself. After the feminism campaign has been trending topic and popularized by activists and critical brainware especially in Aceh, women as the readers, literature, or the character in the literature is always become a trending issue to be examined.

Many women authors involve in this case, and their novels are mostly related to the women matter (Darsono, 2006). The integrity of the women in the modern literature; an feminism perspective toward two men authors. This research study about women that struggle the women rights in taking the part in developing many sectors of the nation as equal as men.

In Aceh, the women issue has never been behind the times since Aceh has the great historical background as the witnesses of the greatness of women such as Keumala Hayati and Cut Nyak Dhien. After Indonesian's independency, Aceh has an internal quarrel with NKRI which triggered the continuous conflict, earthquake and tsunami disaster on December 2004. This condition had surely effect the novelists paradigm in forming the Acehnese women character in their stories.

RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCES

The main significance of this study is to contribute to the knowledge in the field of sociological literature. This research gave the clear picture and answer to the development, and the degradation of the cultural value, or the value of women personality because of the several cases that put the women as the victim such as, sexual harassment, exploitation, and persecution.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Based on the elucidation above, the research problems are formulated as follow.

1. How to the Acehnese litterateur express the Acehnese women's characters in their opuses?
2. How are the Acehnese women characters in 21st century novels?

THEORITICAL BASE

According to Nurgiyantoro (2002: 165) character is an actor of a story which can be simply defined as the nature in which the character in the story and its nature is a solid combination that can not be separated. From that statement, a conclusion can be taken that each character in the story has to be with a certain characteristics that exclusively possessed by each of them because the nature of a character itself will create a series of events in the plot which will lead the story become more alive, interesting and challenging.

Nurgiyantoro (2002: 166) stated that characterizing is a process that show a certain character with a certain characteristics in a story. Jabrohim (2003: 107) stated that characterizing is an author's technique to introduce the character in the story to the reader or an author's technique in appearing the ordinary character. It can be concluded from that statement that characterizing is an effort of the writer to determine the character and his/her characteristics with various technique and methods of introducing the individual in the story line.

The nature and characteristics of a human can be analyzed from his/her reason of doing a particular action in the story. This reason is mostly called as motivation. Motivation can be categorized into two groups. They are exclusive motivation and motivational base. The exclusive motivation can be known from the impromptu reason of a character in unconsciously doing a particular action, talk. Meanwhile, motivational base can be utilized from the common character's nature such is the possibility of an actor in changing their desirability or the attention in controlling the other character continuously in the story.

Sahid (2008: 26) stated that a literature opus is a reflection from the real world that uncover all of social issues. The analysis of the role of women in a literature opus can be either a discourse or an idea toward the women's development from time to time since literature represent the society from era to era.

This study tells about the independency of women in the acehnese society who are capable of doing many activities without men's assistance (Rismawati, 2013). Besides, feminism issues are discussed in many studies in Indonesian's journal such as The women's integrity and gender relation in

the most up-to-date Indonesian's literature novels, created by female's authors. This study discusses about the female integrity and form of struggling gender relation.

The study tries to find a knowledge in form of comprehension (*verstehen*) and explanation (understanding) about the up-to-date Indonesian literature's genre development which is dominated by the opus of the women's author as one of the literature studies which emphasize the understanding of patriarchy ideology in the latest Indonesian literature. As the base assumption, that in the latest decades various opuses which prioritize the patriarchy ideology have arisen to the surface of the society awareness. Most of those opuses are written by female authors (Chasanah, et al, 2009).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is categorized into descriptive qualitative approach as stated by Nasution, (as cited in Sugiyono, 2010: 306) that qualitative research has no option but positioning the human as the main research instrument. Besides, the researcher tries to understand the social status quo deeply. Hence, this research describes the women character in the 21st century Aceh novels.

SOURCES OF THE DATA

The data sources of this study are Aceh novels of 21st century. They are *Lampuki* written by Arafat Nur, *Bidadari Hitam* written by T.I Thamrin, *Tungku* written by Salman Yoga, *Seulusoh* written by D Kemalawati, *Percikan Darah di Bunga* written by Arafat Nur, and *Marwah di Ujung Bara* written by R.H Fitriadi. The selection of these six Aceh novels is based on the quantities of the different women characters mentioned in the story.

DATA ANALYSIS

Technique of data analysis used in this research is interpretation technique with literature hermeneutik, by interpreting the women in the 21st century novels. Ricoeur (as cited in Harun, 2006: 134) stated that hermeneutik has four basic steps. They are (1) The understanding phase, in this phase, the researcher will try to understand data which has been collected, (2) the communicating phase, in this phase, the researcher will try to communicate the understood data and will be delivered using the researcher words, (3) the explanation phase, in this phase, the research will explain the understood data with deeper explanation, (4) interpretation phase, in this phase, the researcher will interpret the data in detail.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this part, the researcher will expose somethings related to the characteristics of Acehnese society that has been taken from six Acehnese novels. The details of the novels has been elaborated in the source of the data and research method.

Women Character In Bidadari Hitam Novel

TI Thamrin, the writer who experienced the Political conflict in Aceh and the had an emotional approach between himself and acehnese society wrote a very strong women character in his story. the women characters in his novel *Bidadari Hitam* are Inoeng, Mak Santan, and Fitriah. Those characters are effected by the Aceh internal conflict between Aceh and Indonesia. Inong is character who has rigid soul and abitious. It can be proven through her attitude and audicity and her ambition to reveal her anger or revenge toward the rapist by contaminate the HIV HIDS. Inoeng was isolated because she was a bastard. A bastard is a huge disgrace in acehnese culture which is very strict with Islamic teaching. Inoeng is one of the example of a humble and simple Acehnese women but the violent and unhuman treatment toward her had changed her to be a tough and abitious person to reveal her revenge. Here is the slight pharagrap of TI Thamrin's novel.

Di pembaringannya malam itu, Inong hanya memikirkan pembalasan dendamnya. Tidak boleh tidak, lambat atau cepat, terutama perwira itu harus merasakan penyakit celaka ini. Merasakan beberapa jenis pe nyakit yang menjadi gejalanya, merasakan akan padamnya pelita kehidupan dan betapa menakutkannya kepastian maut. Dan dialah yang akan menularkan kepada mereka sebagai pembalasan dendam. (Thamrin, 2008:211).

Mak Santan is a reflection of tough and brave women as a symbol of heroic women. Mak Santan is also an old women who did not believe in superstition that is contradictory with islamic faith. To be note that the islamic value is the highest aspect in Acehnese society rather than cultural value. Fitrah is a picture of a kind and well mannered women in her attitude and appearance which is in line with Acehnese culture and islamic teaching value.

Women Characters In The Novel Tungku

Acehnese women have strong characteristics, they have a tenet that it is better not to mourn the sufferings. The crisis that Saban suffered in her life has carved her to be tougher in facing the life. That is the characters that was created in the Acehnese novels *Tungku*. they are Anan, Inem Ipak, and Empun Siti.

Anan is an old women who has audicity and wishful thinking who uphold law, tradition, and justice in the local village. She intentionally sacrificed her eyes as to express her paingful. Empun is a maternal character who tremendously love her son. She was begging for a commutation to a chief of the local court Anan. In other hand, she was a prudent to let her son being punished for his guiltiness. Inem Ipak is a tough and gentle women who was a victiom of a rapping case that committed by group of armed people. But, she tried so hord to keep that case undercover because she did not want people araound her carry her affliction. Her maturnity had transformed her to a tough women in facing her problems. Hence Pepar, the most ideal men admired her personality.

Acehense Women Character In Seuleusoh Novel.

D Keumalawati merupakan seorang penulis perempuan berdarah Aceh. Tentu saja tokoh perempuan yang dibangun sangat emosional karena ia menulis dengan penuh perasaan. Penulis memposisikan diri sebagai orang pertama dalam ceritanya. Tokoh-tokoh perempuan dalam novel ini adalah Meulue dan Nek Piah.

D keumalawati is an Acehnese writer who write the plots with her heart and succesfully create some emotional characters. She put the main character as the first person in her story. the women characters in her story are Mulue and Nek piah

Meulu is a figure who has strong personality which can be proven through her strength and obstinacy to go through her life. Nek Pi'ah reflect the honest and sincere acehnese women personality who never seek a benefit from helping the childbearing mother. She was talented in spelling the spell it was because of her sincerity and honesty. Here is the fragement of the novel.

Nek Piah tidak pernah berbohong. Dalam melakukan pekerjaannya sebagai Nek Bidan, ia juga menggunakan mantra. Mantra yang paling sering digunakan adalah mantra Seuleusoh, mantra untuk mendorong gerak laju bayi mencari jalan keluar dari rahim ibunya. (Keumalawati, 2006:21)

Women Character In Novel Percikan Daran Di Bunga

Arafat Nur describet the character of Aceh women in her novel Percikan Darah di Bunga without pretention. Her life experiences which full of suffering and atrocities of armed conflict have spawned the character who seem alive, especially the female figures Meulue and Mak Beuleun. Meulue is a women who was born in an dayah enviroment which based on the islamic teaching which prohibit non-muhrim women and men to touch even though without any lust. Here is a piece of his novel.

“Meulu terisak, ingin sekali ia memeluk lelaki yang bukan mahram itu. Bukan pelukan nafsu, tapi pelukan untuk menumpahkan penderitaan. Ia rindu sekali akan abangnya. Rindu pada ayah” (Nur, 2005:69).

Mak Beuleun's attitude is very polite when she was living in someone else's house who should be emulated by nowadays society. The homeowner fully aware of Mak Beuleun's mental condition of her living in his house that she was under severe pressure after being raped by some armed men.

Aceh Women Character In The Novel Lampuki

As the novel *Percikan Darah di Bunga*, in this novel Arafat also write the story that expose the female character based on her own experience as an Ustadzah. Most of the Acehnese women's character in the novel did not reflect the polite image of Acehnese women. The figure of Halimah represents not only the attitude of a selfish and unashamed women of Aceh but also minor picture of some Acehnese women who are obscene. These attitude is somehow contrary to the cultural value of Acehnese women in Aceh. Hayati is a women who is selfish and rebellious againsts men. Besides, she liked to slander other people. Her mouth would never stop reprehending that is why, she is the best model for a minor group of Acehnese women who like to talk about others behind.

Siti is an example of an obedient to Islamic teaching Acehnese women who are not only work for themselves but also their environment and people around them by reminding surrounded people to worship and to obey the husband. It shows a Aceh women attitude accordance with the Acehnese norms, culture and tradition.

Women Character In Marwah Di Ujung Bara Novel

It has the similarities with other novels that the character of women in the novel of *Marwah di Ujung Bara* is also have a strong characteristic. Ceudah and Nisa are the women in a university as environmental activist after Reformation. Right after reformation, the nation was not stable so it was the tough time with its problem to carve their personality to be patient and brave figure in order to help their growth. Meanwhile, Halimah is an eyes witnesses of Military operation terror in Aceh. She loosed her husband, her children during the conflict but she still rigidly face that sorrow.

SUMMARY

Based on the elaboration of the result and discussion above, the writer conclude some points as follow:

1. Generally, the female characters of Aceh in 21st century novel are strongly influenced by the conflict and tsunami in Aceh. The inhumane treatment of groups of armed men has altered the character, behavior, and mindset of Acehnese women. The conflict has transformed them to be ambitious, brave, resilient, and courageous in facing any problem in their life.
2. Some Acehnese women depicted in the novel are gentle, honest, and obedient personality who also maintains the politeness as a reflection of the strong Islamic values and culture. They always keep their appearance based on the religious guidance.
3. Despite the chaotic conflict happened there are also a minor Acehnese women who are portrayed in a novel that has a negative nature. They always take advantage of opportunities for personal interests, issuing obscene words, and having an affair. However, it does not affect the image of Acehnese women in general.

Based on the summary that was taken from the discussion, here are the list of recommendation from this study:

1. The character of Acehnese women should be implemented in students' learning media. The future generations have to understand that Acehnese women's character reflected in the Aceh novel has its own uniqueness from Indonesian women in general since they have good role models.
2. Acehnese women's character reflected in Aceh novels is a part of local wisdom image which should be used as a scientific study material by researchers and cultural experts around the world.

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