

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of background of the research, statement of problem, research objective, research significance and definition of key terms.

1.1 Background

Who wants to be colonized and subordinated by other in this life? The answer must be not, even for an animal. No one wants to be in domination and control of other people or nation. Once it happens, the struggle to fight for it will keep alive. Therefore, colonialism issue is always being an interesting topic to discuss.

Talking about colonialism, it will not be separated from the two binary opposition words, colonizer and colonized people, and all the time, the relationship between them is a kind of hegemonic relationship. This is deal with what Said said (5) that the relationship between Occident (Colonizer) and Orient (Colonized people) is a relationship of power, domination and various degrees of a complex hegemony. The colonizer, also called as *The Self*, is always positioned as superior or powerful whereas the colonized people, or *The Other*, as inferior (Gandhi x).

From the relationship pattern above appears what is called by domination and subordination that usually presents the displeased description about the

colonized people or *The Others*. They are described and considered as different, savages, evil as well as inferior (the *demonic other*) (Tyson 420).

Domination and subordination, as a result of colonialism, does not only happen among nations or ethnics, but also in a nation or a certain ethnic, or even a man to a woman. Moreover, women, as *subaltern* in term of Spivak, suffer double domination as the result of colonizer's dominance and man's subordination.

The word *subaltern* refers to colonized or oppressed people. This word is adapted by Spivak from the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, who used it to refer to those of inferior rank without class consciousness (Selden et. al. 224). Spivak, in her writing "*Can Subaltern Speak?*" (in Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin 24-28) stated that "*subaltern cannot speak*". What she means here is not the disability of *subalterns* (colonized people) to speak literally, but they, in every colonial context, do not have conceptual language to speak because there is not any ear from the colonizer to listen or hear them. In other hand, they were fated to keep silent. This is what the researcher found in Khaled Hosseini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Sun*.

A Thousand Splendid Sun novel is a novel which describes the condition of Afghanistan nation where the colonialism is a major problem there. The conflict, as a result of colonialism, is not only between Afghanistan nation with the colonizers at that time (Soviet), but also between an ethnic with another ethnic which is available there, or in another word, conflict of civil war. However, this kind of colonial conflict is not what the researcher will focus on. The kind of

colonial conflict that will be analyzed by the researcher is about the suffering of subaltern that is depicted in the novel and their resistance.

In this novel, the characters Mariam and Laila can be categorized as *subalterns* if we refer to the definition by Spivak above. They, Mariam and Laila, suffered from the double domination and subordination, either from their abusive husband, Rasheed, or the colonizer. Beside it, in this novel is described about the process how the subalterns, Mariam and Laila, fight together for their liberty.

In this research, the researcher will use postcolonial theory, especially postcolonial feminism, as a means to explore the topic of the research. The topic of this research, that is about women's, or in this research as subaltern, suffering, is being interesting because it will be discussed and analyzed by using postcolonial theory. This theory is a kind of metamorphoses theory from postmodern theory. In this research, the researcher will analyze social fact in a literary work, in this case a novel, that is about the suffering of subalterns, or the inferior rank, and their solution overcoming it.

The reason why the researcher choose postcolonial theory as a means to explore *A Thousand Splendid Suns* novel because the story in this novel describes the suffering of the lower rank, woman, as a result of oppression, domination and subordination. The lower rank, in this novel woman, can be categorized as subalterns that are a weak group, suppressed, and powerless. And in the colonial context, they do not have "language" to speak, because there is not any ear from people around them or their society, moreover colonizer, hearing their voice.

The research about subaltern actually is not for the first time to discuss. Previously, there are many researches about subaltern, such as what had done by Utami Widyaningsih from Yogyakarta State University in 2011 with the title *Subaltern dalam Naskah Drama Andorra Karya Max Frisch (A Postcolonial Theory Analysis)*. The result of this research showed the suffering condition of the character Andri as a *subaltern* in six aspects, those are in education, economic aspect, social condition, mental, law or justice and political life. Then, in 2011, Yulyanti Cardena Erda, a student from Andalas University wrote a paper entitled *Subalternisasi dalam Kumpulan Cerpen Perempuan Bawang dan Lelaki Kayu Karya Ragdi F Daye (A Literary Sociological Approach)*. The result of this research showed that the poor and stupid society often suffers subalternity and the majority of them are women. Beside it, the process of subalternity also happened between husband and wife, parent and children, and also bureaucrat and society.

Not only about subaltern which is not the first time to be discuss, but also the novel *A Thousand Splendid Sun*. The former research about this novel is conducted by Sri Wulandari from Pesantren Tinggi Darul Ulum University in Jombang with title *The Oppression against Women in Afghanistan Portrayed in Khaled Hosseini's a Thousand Splendid Suns*. The result of this research is that women are oppressed by the men in their life. However, there is difference in theory that is used to analyze the novel. If Sri Wulandari used feminism theory to analyze it, the researcher in this research will use postcolonial theory, especially postcolonial feminism by Gayatri C. Spivak that is about subaltern.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Based on the background above, it can be drawn the problem of this research that is about the condition of subaltern depicted in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.

Finally, to make the problem clear and limited, the researcher constructs the research questions are as below:

1. How is the suffering of subalterns portrayed in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*?
2. How does the subaltern overcome their suffering depicted in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*?

1.3 Research Objective

According to the explanation above, the researcher will conduct this research for the objective as follows:

1. To identify and analyze the suffering of subalterns depicted in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.
2. To identify and analyze the subalterns's process in solving their suffering depicted in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.

1.4 Research Significance

Individually, this research can improve the researcher's knowledge about literary criticism, especially in analyzing a novel by using postcolonial theory. In addition, this research also enriches my understanding about the suffering of

subalterns in their life. The urgent significance of this research is to develop the awareness that the life of subalterns, or in another term colonized people, is always under the control and subordination of the colonizer, and however, the colonizer is not always right in all aspect of life, because a literature, as a product of a writer, brings understanding about the relation between them, subalterns and their colonizers, and the relation is the relation of power. Thus, subalterns suffer in some aspects of their life because of that relation of power. Moreover, their suffering will increase in they are women, because in colonial discourse, woman are not only in the domination and subordination of colonizer, but also in domination and subordination that is caused by patriarchal system of men. As a result, for the researcher, this research gives new understanding about how the suffering of subalterns in colonial context, and also their struggle and processes to solve their problem.

Academically, this research can be a reference generally for everyone who need and interested in analyzing a novel or another literary work by using postcolonial theory in general and subaltern in particular, and especially for the student of English Literary Department. Practically, this research also informs every people who wants to know about subalternity.

1.5 Definition of Key Term

1. Binary Opposition: refer to any pair of terms that is opposed each other and also has distinctive and particular set of meaning. It is also related to

privileged hierarchically over the other in Western thought (Wolfreys, Robbins and Womack 17-18)

2. Colonial Discourse: is a system of statements within which the world can be known and it by which dominant groups in society constitute the field of truth by imposing specific knowledge, disciplines and values upon dominated groups. In another word, it is the complex of signs and practices that organize social existence and social reproduction within colonial relationships (Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin 42).
3. Postcolonial Theory: attacks on the dominance of western ideologies (Carter, 115)
4. Postcolonial Criticism: to reexamine the history of colonialism from the perspective of the colonized; to determine the economic, political, and cultural impact of colonialism on both the colonized peoples and the colonizing powers; to analyze the process of decolonization; and above all, to participate in the goals of political liberation, which includes equal access to material resources, the contestation of forms of domination, and the articulation of political and cultural identities (Young in Habib 739)
5. Subaltern: is a British word for someone of inferior rank, and combines the Latin terms for "under" (*sub*) and "other" (*alter*) (Abrams 237). It refers to colonized or oppressed people. It is adapted by Spivak from the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, who used it to refer to those of inferior rank without class consciousness (Selden et. al. 224).

6. Orientalism: a western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient because the relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony (Said 3-5).
7. The Other: is anyone who is separate from one's self. The existence of others is crucial in defining what is 'normal' and in locating one's own place in the world (Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin 169).

