

Chapter 1

Introduction

This part provides five parts such as background, problem statement, objective of study, significant of study, and scope of study. This chapter also can represent the content of this study.

Background

Conceptualizing feminism means talking about women as the object of domination and oppression of men. According to Ritzer (as cited in Jayanti, 2013) that feminism is a social theory which critiques social context, politic, economic, and history that happened to the oppressed women. In the other hand Humm (as cited in Jayanti, 2013) states that feminism incorporates both doctrines of equal rights of women (the organized movement to attain women's rights) and an ideology of social transformation which aims to create a world for women beyond simple social equality. Thus, it may bring to a close view that feminism movement tend to fight for the equality of rights between women and men in all aspects of life.

Although feminism movement rejects the inequality of women' rights and positions, not all women get the same rights. In fact white women and black women get different treatments from society. Collins (1990) says that:

“The gender inequality that black Black women have historically experienced is related to but qualitatively different from the gender

inequality experienced by White women. This is not because of essential differences between Black women and White women, but because White women have historically been privileged racially while Black women have been dominated through race and gender.”

Collins’ argument brings our mind to know that black women are unlike white women. White women were usually dominated or discriminated by white men only, but black women were not only discriminated by white people but in the other side they also discriminated by black men. They get double discriminations as women and also as black people. Therefore, the cause of discrimination or oppression that experienced by white women and black women are different.

There are some shocking examples of oppression to the black women. The latest case when a black woman who worked as a banker was being a victim of racism by the police in United States. She was taken to a psychiatric hospital by the police who did not believe that she has a BMW car which driven by her selves on September 14th, 2015 (sindonews.com). Then, the other case is in Milan on November 13th, 2015 (dnaberita.com) when an Afro-American model could not join in catwalk for fashion show because of her race. Those cases show that feminism only focused on the gender inequality without considering racism and classism as the oppressive factors that can also affect women (hooks, 2000).

Moreover black women are not allowed to take any places or rights on determining decision in the field of politic. Burham (as cited in Collins, 2002) states that one aspect in black women’s oppression is the ignoring of black women’s rights and privileges in political dimension. Forbid black women to vote

in election as the example of their rights which ignored in the field of politic.

Thus, it can be discovered about the carelessness of black women's rights.

Supporting to those cases, in the development of feminism some thinkers of Afro-American descendant developed the ideology of black feminist. This ideology appeared because of there was distrust about other ideologies of feminism. Collins explains that earlier feminist views were ethnocentric because they used the experiences of white middle class women and generalized them to all women. Thus, it can be said that problems that faced by black women are more complicated than white women's. Therefore, it can be inferred that they expect for correction of new concept in feminism that care on the bad life of black women.

The movement for getting the new concept of feminism is not only seen from the real life in society, but also it can be seen from the literary work. It cannot be denied that literary work has an important role in feminism movement, because literature is a picture of life. There are many scholars criticize the concept of feminism through literary works, for instance Toni Morrison. She is a writer who criticize feminism concept through novel *Beloved*.

Toni Morrison illustrates black women's life in United States through *Beloved* which published in 1987. This novel is one of those based on the real life and sufferings of black slaves. It is not only describing the historical story of enslavement and black culture, but also telling the story of black women that have been oppressed. *Beloved* also focused on female characters. Hence it can be said that *Beloved* is a kind of feminist novel.

Beloved also is the most famous work of Toni Morrison. According to Stephen Metcalf that *Beloved* is a very genius work. Moreover he also said that there was no other American Novel during last 25 years which by so elegant on categorizing readers psychobiography. Toni Morrison was not only got a special place in American Literature because of her novel, but also she won many awards and Pulitzer Prize for fiction.

The main power attraction of this novel is women characters. The illustration of oppression to the black women can be seen through women characterization. Toni Morrison shows that black women are really suffered. Morrison illustrates the death is better than become a black woman. For instance, it might be seen from this following quotation

“She knotted the earrings into her underskirt to take along, not so much to wear but to hold. Earrings that made her believe she could discriminate among them.” (Morrison 1987, p106)

Based on that quotation seen that something which doesn't make any sense becomes the cause of oppression that experienced by black women. In addition, women characters can also show to the readers about oppression that happened to the black women. We can see how racial identities of black women make them oppressed by white people and even black people. Based on those cases, this study will be conducted by investigating the oppression against black women as reflected in Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*.

Problem of Study

Based on the background above, there is a problem of interest to be discussed in this study. The problem under concern is as follow: How is black women's oppression as portrayed through black women characters in *Beloved* by Toni Morrison?

Objective of Study

The objective of the study is to investigate black women's oppression that experienced by black women character in Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*.

Significance of Study

This study will introduce a new research in literary subject in English Department. It is because this research will analyze the oppression against black women by using black feminist theory and feminist literary criticism, and it is never been examined by students of English Department, State University of Gorontalo. This study also gives significance for understanding and providing more knowledge about feminism. Moreover, it may be expected to give significant to the future researchers who will conduct studies about literature focusing on feminism by providing preliminary study. Then this study also is expected to make the readers realize that some people are being oppressed by another people because of the difference of races. It is synchronous with the characteristic of literature as Plato's statement that literature is a product of imitating or reflection the reality. It may be concluded that literature tells about

the truth of life. Hopefully this study can give contribution to the improvement of knowledge for the readers especially for English Department students of State University of Gorontalo.

Scope of Study

The scope of the study is limited to the analysis of the Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*. This study will focus on the representative of black women characters such as Sethe Suggs, Beloved, Denver, and Baby Suggs by using feminist literary criticism.