

WOMEN TRAFFICKING IN SOMALY MAM'S THE ROAD OF LOST INNOCENCE: GENETIC STRUCTURALISM ANALYSIS

(*PERDAGANGAN WANITA DALAM NOVEL THE ROAD OF LOST INNOCENCE KARYA SOMALY MAM: ANALISIS STRUKTURALISME GENETIK*)

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Abstract

The Road of Lost Innocence is the only one Somaly Mam's novel that was published in 2008, which set in the Cambodian twentieth century. This novel is focused on the perception of binary opposition between the trafficking and the anti-trafficking actions. The trafficking action belongs to the traffickers who are pro to women trafficking and the other one belong to the victims who are contra with the women trafficking practice. There are three goals of this study. The first is to find out about the women trafficking that are portrayed in *The Road of Lost Innocence* novel. This step will be focused on the binary opposition between the trafficking action in the life of lower class with the anti-trafficking action that are depicted in the novel. The second is to know about the social condition of Cambodian society in the twentieth century. The third is to know about the world view of the author that is represented in the novel. This article begins with the analysis of the novel and uses genetic structuralism theory. By applying Goldmann theory of genetic structuralism, we can analyze the structure of the text and Cambodian social structure as well as the world view of the collective subject of the author. The result of the study show that the binary opposition between master and victim thoughts in the trafficking practice that is represented in the novel intertwines with social-cultural condition in Cambodia in the twentieth century. The world view of the collective subject that the writer represents in the novel is anti-trafficking practice by resisting the existence of trafficking practice and struggle for humanity for all people.

Keywords: women trafficking, anti-women trafficking, genetic structuralism, Cambodian social structure .

Abstrak

The Road of Lost Innocence adalah satu-satunya novel karya Somaly Mam yang diterbitkan pada tahun 2008, yang berlatar-belakang di Kamboja pada abad ke-dua puluh. Novel ini fokus pada persepsi oposisi biner antara aksi perdagangan dan anti-perdagangan. Aksi perdagangan yang dimaksudkan dalam hal tersebut adalah para pelaku perdagangan (master) yang pro terhadap perdagangan wanita dan disisi lain merupakan korban yang kontra terhadap terjadinya perdagangan wanita. Ada tiga masalah yang dibahas dalam studi ini. Pertama adalah menemukan tentang perdagangan wanita yang terlukiskan pada novel *The Road of Lost Innocence*. Langkah ini akan fokus pada oposisi biner antara aksi perdagangan yang terjadi pada kehidupan kelas bawah dengan anti-perdagangan yang tergambar dalam novel. Kedua adalah untuk mencari tau tentang kondisi kehidupan sosial pada masyarakat Kamboja di abad kedua puluhan. Ketiga untuk mencari tau tentang pandangan dunia pengarang yang direpresentasikan pada novel. Dengan menggunakan teori Goldmann Strukturalisme Genetik, kami akan menganalisis struktur tes dalam novel dan struktur sosial Kamboja serta pandangan dunia pengarang. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa oposisi biner antara pemikiran master dan korban pada praktek perdagangan yang direpresentasikan dalam novel mempunyai hubungan dengan kondisi kultur sosial di Kamboja pada abad kedua puluh. Pandangan dunia pada subjek kolektif penulis yang dipresentasikan dalam karya novelnya adalah anti-perdagangan dengan cara melawan adanya praktek perdagangan dan mempejuangkan kemanusiaan untuk semua orang .

1. Introduction

Somaly Mam is a Cambodian woman that becomes popular with her one debut novel upon book publication. This novel is the true story based on her very horrific life. Mam stated that she was born in either 1970 or 1971 in a tribal minority family in Mondulkiri, Province. Cambodia in that time was in the great upheaval that caused by a regime that tried to lead the country. Her life became horrific life when she was sold into sexual slavery, the trafficking and

sexual exploitation of women. The kinds of oppression, suffering, struggling towards women in Cambodia when Khmer Rouge regime occupied this country are portrayed in *The Road of Lost Innocence*. This novel describes woman trafficking and their struggle to get a better life.

The Road of Lost Innocence is the portray of the socio phenomenon of the government system that takes the power to control its people. The depiction of the characters and conflicts in the novel is

symbolically related to the socio-historical Cambodian society in the 20th century. This government system makes the people live under poverty line. Then, the human trafficking becomes sprawling in the Cambodia at that time. It is one of the interesting issues that can be studied by using Goldmann's theory.

Genetic structuralism is a branch of literary studies that emphasis on the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects that give influences to the author's idea in writing a literary work. This theory is suited for analyzing this novel because this study is intended to understand the structure of the novel, which is focused on the perception of binary opposition between trafficking and the anti-trafficking. The social condition of Cambodia in the novel more or less gives us brief illustration about the real Cambodia when the novel was written. Understanding Cambodia social structure is also intended to know the worldview of collective subject that the author represents in her novel.

This research has three questions that would like to give the limitation of the discussion to avoid the expanding problem in the discussion. They can be stated as follow:

1. How are women trafficking portrayed in the novel?
2. How is the social condition of Cambodian society in the twentieth century in Cambodia?
3. What is the world view presented in the novel?

We hope the result of this study will benefit the readers and those who are interested in the study of genetic structuralism analysis. Every research always has the goal. There are three goals of this study.

1. To find out the women trafficking that are portrayed in *The Road of Lost Innocence* novel. This step will be focused on the binary opposition between trafficking in the life of lower class with the anti-trafficking that depicted in the novel.
2. To know about the social condition of Cambodian society in the twentieth century.
3. To know about the world view of the author represented in the novel.

2. Method of Research

The type of research that the writer uses is qualitative methodology which is emphasized in the descriptive text which focuses on analyzing data and

information. Bogdan (1975: 5) states that qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data such as written words or verbal expression from the people and their behaviors that have been observed. The writer uses this methodology because the data that will be analyzed are in the form of words, sentences, dialogues and statements which have been sorted and carefully selected in accordance with the topic of the research.

This research also uses the secondary data to strengthen the arguments in analyzing the source data. The secondary data are any fact and information about the society of Cambodian in the 21st century or in the Khmer Rouge regime which gives the influence of the story of the novel. The secondary data are taken from articles, journal, and other materials from internet.

The analysis of the binary opposition between trafficking and anti-trafficking will be processed by the theory of genetic structuralism to understand the world view of the writer through the female main character's way of thinking and the descriptions of anti-trafficking in the novel.

Result

Based on the data which have been collected and analyzed, it is found the binary opposition between master and victim way of thinking which becomes the structure of the novel and the world vision of the writer through the female main character's way of thinking. The main female character, Somaly Mam, lives in the horrific situation. One of their problems is to find freedom of life. *The Road of Lost Innocence* tells about the experiences of her early life and her awakening as an activist feminist and her bravery to shout and fight against the oppressor. She also tries to help the Cambodian girls to get their rights and freedom as well as try to ruin the life of those who have been stealing the lives of these girls.

3. Discussion

The discussion of this article focuses on the conflict between two characters that are categorized as the traffickers and the victim of woman trafficking. The binary opposition between the sex slave and the people who take control under sex slave becomes the structure of the novel.

The first discussion that I want to analyze is the women trafficking issue that depicted in *The Road of Lost Innocence*. It investigates the women trafficking issue which consists of the binary opposition between

master and victim way of thinking. The traffickers or masters are the doers of women trafficking who are pro to trafficking practice, such as grandfather, the pimps, and some Cambodian people. Other characters are opposed to the trafficking practice, especially the women who are sold into trafficking practice as happen to Somaly Mam who tends to reject the trafficking practice.

The women trafficking practice exists in Cambodia because of one of the problems which is related to the way of thinking of the traffickers' community about their supremacy towards the victims who are from lower class. This trafficking practice occurred for a long time because of supporting of the inadequacy of the laws and policies in Cambodia. These conditions influenced the social life in Cambodia especially women inferior position. Every society has different custom, culture and belief. When someone makes a mistake or breaks the rule, then that person must receive the consequences. The patriarchal society has an important role in Cambodia. This kind of society triggers to make women become inferior and subordinated. The man's power is often misused by them in order to take profit of it.

The poverty in Cambodia at that time was the main problem of the trafficking practice. The debt trapped became usual thing that occur in the Cambodian people. The debt trapped in the scope of family makes some families hiring their daughters or even their wives to the debt collector to pay their debt. Now, the debt collectors become their masters and the women become their slaves and should obey them. The women must work under their masters order. The master wants to take profit from the existence of these women. Then, they begin the business to sell the women bodies to the men that they called "client". Lastly, this business was known under the name of prostitution. Therefore, the prostitution in Cambodia became more increasing in number.

"Some prostitutes are sold to the *meebon* by their parents or relatives, or by their husbands. The price depends on their freshness and beauty, as well as the cleverness and connections of the seller. Today some girls are kidnapped into prostitution, but I don't think that used to happen so much when I was young. Most of the girls at Aunty Peuve's

house were there as a kind of deposit, to pay back a debt. They were supposed to work until they paid back the money their families owed—unless the families took out new debts that extended their daughter's servitude." (Mam, 2008: 50)

The woman who is sold to the pimp belonged to them until she paid their debt. They must do hardwork in the prostitution to pay their family debt to their master. The prostitutes must obey their client and treat their client with consideration. If they were hired by client, they must show good behavior. If they took a hard line or ill disposed toward the client, they will get fatal consequences. The client will complain to their pimp, and then she will get a punishment. Giving the punishment to the prostitutes who did not obey the adjustment became the usual thing in prostitution. The pimps keep a punishment room for the prostitutes who disobey and break the master's rules. Giving the harsh punishment to the rebel prostitutes is believed by pimps as the best way to control their sex slaves. The pimps think that giving punishment to prostitutes makes them more obedient that they will not make any mistake again.

The pimps prefer to kill the sex slaves who try to escape rather than defend her or give punishment in punishment room because it can give the other slaves a lesson that a fatal mistake brings fatal consequences. It is the custom in Cambodia, where the master or even the client is always related to slave suffering. There is no law that protects the prostitutes even the police know that the master kills their sex slave, they would never be jailed. Women trafficking in the novel are presented with the sorrow life. Harsh punishments are often received by sex slaves. The aim of giving harsh punishment to the slave is to show that the masters have the power to take control of their lives. In short, the slaves' lives belong to their masters.

In this era, there were so many attempts against the human trafficking. Those actions happen because of the interaction between one individual with their collective group. The collective subject did not stand by themselves, but they stand together into collective or group. Within the collective subject, the individuals work together and they share things and experience in common between them. Goldmann argues that (1981: 56)

"The structuring process results from the fact that individuals and the social groups that

they constitute (groups formed by individuals finding themselves related to one another and, in certain more or less important aspects, in similar situations) seek to give unitary and coherent responses to the aggregation of problems posed by their relations with the surrounding environment. Or to put it another way, they tend by their action (praxis) to establish a balance between themselves and this environment.” (1981: 56)

Slave who is courage to reject the clients desire or hurting them is actually facing more dangerous situation. The prostitutes who break the rule or reject the master’s or the client’s willing, must be punished and get fatal punishment. Therefore, to avoid the fatal punishment and the mostly chosen survived attempt by rebellious prostitutes are absconding. Escaping becomes one of the brave actions done by the sex slavery. The phenomenon of slave running away from their master and seeking to gain freedom is as old as the institution of slavery itself. Generally the prostitutes tried to find the place where they feel safe and peace.

There are several prostitutes who help another prostitute against the harsh client treatment especially Somaly Mam. Her action shows the kind of resistance and against the trafficking person in the prostitution. Mam’s action to help the prostitutes continued and began to be more focus after she was released from prostitution world. In order to help the prostitutes, she began to establish the non-governmental organization which focused on the fight against the women trafficking.

The first support and fund from other organization make her more enthusiastic to reach her dream gaining the prostitutes freedom. She continued to recognize her will and her organization to the world by using the media. Therefore, her story and her organization become sprawling and well-known in the worldwide. Then, after many years of struggle, she got supports and funds from big organization such as UNICEF, ECHO, European Union and many more. After getting many supports from others, she began expanding her organization in many countries in Asia.

The political and economic chaos in Cambodia at that time makes the country popular of the sex trade in Asia. The political history of Cambodia before

independence and after independence shows series of problems, chaos, and affliction.

In 1975 the history of horrific and tragic life for Cambodian people under the reign of Khmer Rouge began. During the Khmer Rouge reign, Cambodia blocks a relation and isolates themselves with other countries. That extreme government also isolate themselves from new modern technology in order to make Cambodia became an independent country without intervenes with other countries. Furthermore, under the regime of Khmer Rouge, all aspect of life like money, private property and jewelries are controlled by the government. The transaction system using the money is no longer used.

The emerging sex trade was supported by the situation of that time. The time after Khmer Rouge left the power was the difficult time of people because all of the people lived under the line of poverty and in miserable condition. Therefore, many people want to get a better life or at least reach the line of poverty by entering the prostitution world. The poverty became the main cause of the sprawling of sex slavery and human traffic in Cambodia.

Through this novel, Somaly Mam represents the world view of her collective group as a victim. She wants to show her aspiration to fight out the problem that happens in Cambodia, especially about women trafficking. She represents her society to criticize the condition that happens in that age. That condition brings her to write the story of the terrible condition of life at that time through the literary work. Somaly Mam as the author and the main character all at once portrays her opinion related to the trafficking practice in Cambodia. She rises up the anti-trafficking practice by her action to resist and against the traffickers who runs the trafficking practice. She also shout out about the humanity and claim that the main feature of her activities is her humanitarian efforts. This humanity is an evolutionary movement in which no part of the human existence harms the others and none of us limit the other to get a better life.

Mam thought that people who run the trafficking business or the people who enjoy the sex slavery are the people who have the evil spirit inside their hearts. What Mam thinks is that the people should not rob the freedom of other people. Every human being has own right to live peacefully. All people should respect and

care each other by ignoring their status or differences among them.

Mam's purpose to write this novel is a greater movement to resist and to against the injustice of society in Cambodia where the young girls and women are trafficked and its practice keep the victims in their position and limit them to get a better life. It is shown in the Mam words "On their behalf, I would like this book to serve as a call to the governments of the world to get involved in the battle against the sexual exploitation of women and children (Mam, 2008: 207). Therefore as literary work, *The Road of Lost Innocence* can be interpreted as a reflection and assessment to get the better life of Cambodian women and young girls. It shows when Somaly takes her action to the realization to abolish the trafficking practice. She began to establish and manage the non-governmental organization to help the victims.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of the novel *The Road of Lost Innocence* shows the difference of the character's way of thinking in facing the women trafficking issue. It is divided into two categories, first is trafficking and the rest is anti-trafficking in the novel. The trafficking category belongs to the way of thinking of the traffickers who are pro to women trafficking. This category tells about how the traffickers see the trafficking practice as their profit and how their actions toward the sex slave. The second category is anti-trafficking that belongs to the victim especially Somaly Mam who opposes the women trafficking practice. This category particularly discusses the actions against trafficking such as rejection the punishment, escaping from their master, and establishing the NGO to help the other victims gaining their freedom.

The human trafficking issue is also dependent on particular situation in the country, for example the economic, law, socio cultural, as well as the historical subject. By investigating the social condition of Cambodia in the 20th Century, it leads to know the society where Somaly Mam lives and it also helps to know about the human trafficking problems in Cambodia. Once, Khmer Rouge regime left the power, the sex trade begun to re-emerge. The re-emerging of sex trade was supported by the situation of that time. The time after Khmer Rouge left the power was the difficult time of people because all of the people lived

under the line of poverty and in miserable condition. Therefore, many people want to get a better life or at least reach the line of poverty by entering the prostitution world.

Through this novel, Somaly Mam wants to show her aspiration to fight out the problem that happens in Cambodia, especially about women trafficking. She represents her society to criticize the condition that happens in that age. That condition brings her to write the story of the terrible condition of life at that time through the literary work. Somaly Mam as the author and the main character all at once portrays her opinion related to the trafficking practice in Cambodia. She rises up the anti-trafficking practice by her action to resist and against the traffickers who runs the trafficking practice. She asks all the people around the world to help and care each other, no matter what their nationality, race and social status. In this case, she emphasized to support the victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in Cambodia and several countries in Southeast Asia. She went on to co-found AFESIP to combat the sexual trafficking of young girls and women.

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