

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of Study

The word feminism here refers to the thought of demanding for equality between sexes. For years, women are demanding an equal standard on parity for men and women. The *Encyclopedia Americana* noted that the most important phrase of feminism movement was women suffrage movement, which was proposed at Seneca Falls, New York, July 1848. This woman suffrage, firstly, was calling out the right of women to vote. Starting with the movement, the spirit of consciousness of feminism was spread out over countries until the present days (1977: 102-103).

The result of the movement talking for years is a difference, or bread new way in looking and thinking about woman. They are no longer the "suppressed" class under a fundamentally sexist system dominated by males. Bressler (1990:180) in *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice* says that men, either unconsciously or consciously, have oppressed women, allowing them little or no voice in the political, social, or economic issues of their society. Furthermore, women feminists declare, must define themselves and assert their own voices in the arenas of politics, society, education, and the arts. By personally committing themselves to fostering such change, feminists hope to create a society where the male and female voices are equally valued.

We can see many occupations held by women: pilot, teacher, doctor and many others jobs required by females this period. Today we are no longer thinking that women lead some males are something "queer". In Bressler (1999:183) in *Literary An Introduction to Theory and Practice* says: feminist critics of this era asserted that males who created and enjoyed a place of prominence within the canon assumed that all readers were males. Women reading such are duped into reading as a male.

The process of creating new women ideas, as a result of feminism movement, is not simple. The present condition of women takes a lot of sacrifices, victims and time, for sure. One important aspect in spreading the values or the spirit of feminism is socializing the feminism itself. The supporters of feminism at early time is used many demonstration or females marching on the streets of many cities and yielding out the ideas of feminism spirit. In the opposite direction, some feminists choose to popularize feminism spirit through written materials. The supporters feel rather suitable to tell people using words and phrase. Works of written literatures also take part in socializing the spirit of feminism over countries. By exposing feminism ideas in the form of written literature, those ideas can be read and understood by many people in various countries. The socialization through written materials is one of the important factors in the feminism development. As Kingston's perception that she does not want to be a wife house and slave only, so Kingston has a perception the importance and value of women's roles in given society by culture force (Kingston 1974:19;line 3).

Those opinions above are the reason why the writer is interested to make the thesis in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*. In her novel, the author uses point of view the story is told as through is in it. The *I* is the character who tells the story. In this research, the character that will be analyzed is Maxine Hong Kingston itself (Kingston for further mention) as the main character in "The Woman Warrior". In *The Woman Warrior*, the idea of feminism is shown by the existence of Fa Mu Lan as the hero. Kingston remembers the Chinese folktales about the woman warrior. Fa Mu Lan disguises herself as a man and goes to battle in place of her aged father. She returns to her village victorious, a heroine for all Chinese women. Her story empowers women to seek more out of life than being the wives and slaves of men who will claim to own them. As a young girl, Kingston envisions herself as Fa Mu Lan, enabling her to escape from the disappointments of her American life.

Fa Mu Lan as the woman hero affects Kingston's perception of feminism. She thinks that women are valuable person, they must grow up to get an equality value and the rights as men. In the novel is described, Kingston does not want to be a woman because the birth of woman is not wanted by parents at that time (Kingston 1974:46).

The feminism's spirit is seen to by the inequality of women's rights. Kingston's aunt pregnant with an illegal husband. The aunt's adultery disrupts that society. According to Chinese tradition, a person who disgraces a family is a person whose existence is denied. Angry that the aunt should disgrace them, the village person raids the family's property. Then, all of them move to America and

leaves their country home of Chinese. Another hand, Kingston's mother is as medicine woman. She becomes known as great healer in her village. However, in America, she cannot practice medicine.

In *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston describes that she does not want to conform to the traditional Chinese roles at America. Her family background gives a spirit to grow up as a Chinese girl who wants an equal standard to American girl. Accordingly, the writer is interested to make an analytical study in term of feminism.

The choosing of literary field as the source of this thesis' substance is concerned with the function of literature as a mean to understand life. It is so, because literature depicts the actual occurrence that human beings deal with getting in touch, with literature will highly raise awareness' of the values of life since its subjects implied moral and social as well. Working out on literature is expected to bring the writer to the deepening of consciousness in gazing at values of life, including feminism. Moreover, this thesis is going to deal literary work in the form of novel.

Compared to other types of literary works, novel offers more details, which make the readers grasp the understanding of its essence easily. Here, the elements of fictions are also figured out more clearly and lively with the result that the writer will be able to construct the impression of implied thought.

1.2 Statement of Problems

Dealing with the preceding discussion, the writer will give an attention on Kingston character by proposing problems to analyze into these following questions:

- a. How is the feminism in the novel described?
- b. What is Kingston's perception on feminism?
- c. What is Kingston's later perception on feminism?

1.3 The Limitation of The Problem

A thesis must have limitations. It is avoid some problem out of context. The scope also gives a reference in writing a thesis and so does the thesis. The limits are:

1. The study on domestic role of women by the Kingston's perception.
2. The study of the influence of environment on feminism.

1.4 Objectives of Study

The objective of study is to find the answer for the proposed problems though the analysis. Thus, the study is intended to:

- a. Elaborate the feminism in the novel.
- b. Analyze the previous Kingston's perception on feminism.
- c. Elaborate Kingston's later perception on feminism.

1.5. Significances of Study

This study is an attempt to give deeper insight into human mind and woman's, or more precisely a widow woman character, problems through the observation of human character. This study also tends to enrich our knowledge about the literary work, in this case the novel by Maxine Hong Kingston under the heading: *The Woman Warrior*. Furthermore, it will hopefully be an input for other further studies concerning this work.