FEMALES' CHALLENGES AGAINST MALE DOMINATION

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ABSTRAK

Wanita telah melakukan banyak upaya untuk mengaktualisasikan diri mereka guna menunjukkan kepada dunia siapa mereka dan merobah kesan salah terhadap mereka. Upaya tersebut dilakukan untuk mencapai persamaan antara wanita dan pria didunia ini. Dalam mewujudkan hal tersebut mereka mendapatkan tantangan tidak saja dari para kaum pria tapi juga sebagian kaum wanita.

Pada dasarnya mereka berupaya menaklukkan tantangan yang merebak disekeliling mereka. Pertama, wanita tidaklah seperti yang dipikirkan laki laki tetapi seperti apa yang mereka gambarkan. Wanita harus merombak norma "phallocentric" yang mengagungkan pria. Mereka perlu terus berusaha mempengaruhi masyarakat untuk membaca apa yang ditulis oleh wanita. Pada saat yang sama wanita juga harus berjuang melawan wanita pengikut masyarakat patriakat.

INTRODUCTION

In her article Trafficking in Women, Victoria Pope described the condition and situation of young women in Russia. According to a forthcoming report by Global Survival Network and the International League for Human Rights, as Pope quoted, "Tens of thousands of women from the former Soviet Union are trafficked each year to disparate parts of call - Macao, Dubai, Germany, Israel, and the U.S. - for work as go-go and striptease dancers, call girls, and escorts" (38). She continued that many of them seemed to have everything going for them: they were attractive, well educated, and resourceful. They were exploited because they were desperate for work and for the future that their impoverished lands could not give them.

It is a common panorama that takes place not only in Russia and other impoverished or chaotic countries, but almost in any country in the world. The women were brought to big cities and employed in bars, message parlors, and brothels around the world. These young women were made to join

the global sex industry. It is estimated that some 30 million women and children since 1970s have fallen victim to the traffickers of human being. Many come from Thailand, the Philippines, and other Asian countries.

They have become a favorite commodity of criminal class along with the illicit trades such as narcotics and weapons. The traffickers seem to be more and more interested in the business since they find it more beneficial in a sense that they can sell one woman's service again and again while drugs and guns are sold only once.

The women were not the ones who wanted to be trafficked, sold, or employed in the target countries. They were coerced, trapped, and forced to do so. Some trafficked women who were arrested for illegal jobs in Washington said that their odyssey began with an advertisement in St. Petersburg newspaper for high-paying jobs abroad as partners and waitresses, but they found themselves pressed into another service: giving favors by day and sleeping on the message tables at nights. Their suffering still did not end even though they had gotten the jobs. They were always be exploited by the gangs that had trafficked them or by their new employers. They did not seem to be employed but slaved. They did not receive the money they deserved, but they were paid the least. These women could not do anything to protest their being smuggled or paid less because they were illegal. Elena Tiurivkanova, as quoted by Pope, an expert on migration at Moscow's Institute of Population Studies said that the women were the people without rights. Their non-status made them easy to victimize.

What Makes Women Different from Men?

According to Webster's Dictionary, gender is related to the behavioral, cultural, and psychological traits of one sex rather than another. Virginia Sapiro stresses, " Gender is a function not simply of biology but of culture and society. Gender is constructed through the arrangements of particular sex/gender systems which are themselves complex. Thus the definition of men's and women's gender is socially constructed in a way that makes it contingent on many aspects of a person situation" (1994:102). Women have their own characteristics and men do too. In spite of the differences, in some conditions and situations both groups show similar or changing traits. Men are believed to be more aggressive while women are more submissive. In some occasions, men are submissive and women are aggressive. In other occasions, both men and women are aggressive. To an extent, it is perhaps

difficult to accept that they are completely different as both groups sometimes cross the border.

As Sapiro confirms, the biological traits are the bases that differentiate men from women. When a baby is born, the baby already belongs to a gender. Physically, a baby boy is different from a baby girl. Their sexes make them different from one another although we cannot see more differences in them. In line with their development, we will see that they begin showing their differences. In their 3-4 years of age, the boy likes to play with guns and cars while the girl likes to play with dolls. Although there is no specific theory that can explain this correctly and completely, we can possibly look at what biologists have taught us. Biologically each of us has a couple of chromosomes:

A woman has XX chromosomes and a man has XY chromosomes. Every newborn will inherit the distinction.

This basic difference may make men and women different in many ways. Behaviorally, it is acceptable for a woman to cry in public, but it is inappropriate for a man to do so. In many countries, it is strange for a person to wear the cloth of the opposite sex. In Indonesia, for instance, it is absolutely not negotiable for a man to wear a skirt, but it is now acceptable for a woman to wear trousers. All of these differences cannot be explained by biology because they are socially constructed. We were born and raised in a community that has already inherited certain norms, systems, traditions, and cultures. These things directly or indirectly limit and teach men and women to behave accordingly. Then, men and women have been defined and regulated. Who defined and regulated them?

History proves that men have almost always been in power from the beginning of human history up to the present time. Almost any regime or authority was/is headed by male/s. We cannot, of course, refuse that there were/are some regimes or authorities that were/are led by females, but their authorities were/are still limited or regulated by their male subordinates. The authority gives men a power that enables them to manage and establish anything they want. They settle the norms and systems that can be advantageous, helpful, and supportive to their existence. They dominate the world, but they do not want to be dominated.

MALE DOMINATION

In male tradition, women should always be controlled as they used to be.

The control should be directed not only to maintain men's domination but also to protect women from wiles and misdeeds. Men write books about sciences, cultures, and traditions. They teach both men and women the same things. Unfortunately, they condition women to follow their rules. As those who are raised under male authorities, women willingly or unwillingly need to meet the needs of men. Overall, the domination can be seen in several segments of life.

First, ideology is the very basic domain that has become a powerful tool for men to transplant their ideas and inspirations to both men and women. With many kinds of effort, they attempt to sneak into any possible institution to actualize their ideology.

For example, they take advantage of religions. Religions ideologically play a very important role in indoctrinating human beings. They have proved to be the strongest institutions that teach both men and women to behave accordingly. Men are placed higher than women. Men as the conquerors of the world are given the authority to manage women while women are conditioned to follow it. For example, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, which was written by German monks in 1484 as the handbook for clerical inquisitors in service of the Roman Catholic Church, specifies the stages and procedures designed to wring confessions from both accused witches and warlocks. In the book, it is mentioned that all women are potential witches. The writers of the book superimposed their guidelines upon any woman. If people could not find her witchery, they would see her latent one. However, the authors also made clear that men are just as susceptible to the devil's wiles. Satan's recruitment of women is merely an intermediary gesture: through women turned-witches, he could most easily reach men and make them warlocks that recuperate the whole human race.

So, this is an example of how a paternal society was formed and regulated in the Catholic tradition in the middle age. Up to the present time, we still see the strong influences of the tradition in the later eras especially in the conduct books and advice manuals. The tradition is passed from one generation to other generations. People who embrace certain religions are those who are greatly influenced by the religious norms while those who do not embrace any religion or are not influenced by any religious teaching are

usually restricted by the social values in which they live or by the philosophical doctrines they trust. In this respect, such planted ideology keeps evolving without any significant change or modification.

Virginia Sapiro says that patriarchal ideology keeps every man in control. If a woman makes too many claims he can abandon and reject her with a relatively social cost, partly because he can accuse her of promiscuity. She argues that such practice is the reflection of how the man plants his ideology to the woman. The man does not want to hear any complain from the woman because he thinks that she should not do that and should just follow what the patriarchal ideology has taught her.

Second, the world has politically been divided into genders: men and women perhaps from the beginning of human history. With their power, men place themselves in the first position and women the second. Through the process of the placement, men get accustomed to oppressing women. Deborah Wilson and Christine Moneera Laennec say, "The traditions of oppression are framed through institutional practices. As the result of the conflict, the female body has been technically and rhetorically manipulated through out history in response to cultural and social anxieties that are specific to a given historical moment" (1997:5).

Cultural constrains and social codes depend upon differentiating hierarchically between men and women. The hierarchy is applied systematically and institutionally through oppression, victimization, and collaboration. The hierarchy produces the opposition between male and female. The sexual differences keep being described as the naturally or culturally constructed things in order to maintain the superiority of one from another. So, the superiority enables men to control and manipulate women. The control is obvious in their attempts to manage women's bodies.

Third, the issue of benefiting from the female bodies is regularly operative from the Renaissance to the present day. The tradition of oppression continuously takes place. Knowingly or unknowingly, the issue has been the problem that women deal with in their daily lives. They are being exploited in their jobs; they are responsible for the same things men do, but in most cases they are paid less. They are capable of doing what men can, but they hardly even get the chance. They are hindered because they are women.

If we traced back from the ancient time up to now, we would see that the dominant societies have been using the female bodies as the commodity that can be explored to fulfill their needs. Women's bodies become not only

the issues of oppression and opposition but also the issue of advantage. Their bodies have been of great importance in the enlightenment of economy. In modern communities, for instance, it is common that women fall victim of men's authorities. They are using the female bodies to gain as many benefits as possible. In the world of photography, for example, the female bodies are very widely exploited. The industry that is dominated by men is designed to meet the needs of the people.

Such practice is rather conspicuous in the world of entertainment, the world which becomes one of the most profitable sources of income. The male executives who manage and control the industry cannot avoid employing women because women are a part of the most determinative elements in the industry. In the fields of music and film, for examples, women are absolutely required to play certain roles such as actresses and musicians. Unfortunately, their status and participation are not rewarded as equally as those of men. Their importance does not meet their expectations in which they do not receive the appropriate treatment. They are orchestrated and regulated as men want them to be not as they are. The problem is ostensibly seen in the less income they receive and the masculinized roles they have to play. They have to play the female roles created by men not the roles they really want to play.

Ann Weich and Susan Vandiver argue that the victimization is not restricted to areas of exploitation and physical abuse, women in their economic roles, endure discrimination in their jobs and humiliation in the second class labor market. Women of color even suffer doubly from their sex and race. They are concentrated into positions with low levels of authority, and high levels of supervision so that their employers can make sure they are not distracted from their works.

Last, in society, the traditional images of the earth mother, the witch, and the vampire are commonly associated with the female bodies. The images create negative impacts on the treatment of women. Due to their powerlessness and vulnerability, they suffer much in the social conditions that tolerate many kinds of violence and abuse such as rape and harassment. They very often have to face not only those bad things but also the society's images that they are the source of all of that. They continue to be powerless because they cannot get support from the society in which they live.

Paternal community is responsible for planting the image that women's bodies are ugly and grotesque. Men talk more about women's bodies than

about themselves. They try hard to invent tools and technology that can be useful for women to always modify their bodies and remove their ugliness in order to become better. They work hard to make the women's ugliness and grotesque removed from them. Dean and Juliet Flower MacCannell, as quoted by Alice E. Adams, describe the rigidity and scope of current paradigms: " Beauty standards apply to face paint color, body size and weight, breast shape, upper arms measurement, head and body hair texture, color and visibility, facial expression, garment and accessory selection and coordination" (1997:72). What they describe are the realities that women face nowadays. Men create what the perfect women look like. The planted images are obviously portrayed in some novels, paintings, and films.

In social practice, it is now common that women try to meet with the people's constructed standards of perfection. Aesthetic surgery, for example, becomes popular among women who want to look beautiful. Some surgeons even say that women's desire to look their best with the help of cosmetic surgery is essential to their nature as women.

WOMEN'S STRUGGLE

Language is a very good medium for expressing ideas and exposing situations and conditions. Because of that, people use it to transfer ideologies, maintain certain positions, and reach some purposes. There is no doubt that language is widely used to teach people and portray the past, present, and future, but the language used still symbolizes the dual order that has dominated the western society with its phallocentric perspectives. In this century, women have ultimately broken through the male dominated rhetorical activity by doing further attempts to study and analyze the views of women as the subject. So far, they had been used as the object, and now they have reached the awareness that they are exploited and began speaking as the subject of themselves. The renaissance is seen at least in film and writing.

The phallocentric language has been used by women for centuries without any significant effort to protest it but to abide by it. However, American Feminists are fighting for freedom from the male formation and trying to use their own creation while French Feminists have come to the conclusion that the dominant language is multiple. Women also have the ability to construct a language of their own. So far, they have been trained to live with two bodies: women and men. They have experienced masculinity and the con-

structed femininity. Now, they are taking their turn to speak instead of being spoken. For that purpose, they require a feminine language that also accepts the masculine one.

Writing is a medium that Feminists widely use to express themselves and their voices. It is a device that they use to challenge the sexual oppressions. Even though they cannot avoid using the phallocentric language, they can take advantage of the language by changing, reforming, and polishing any incorrect element in the language such as slang, dialect, or linguistic that does not reflect their real being. This activity helps them influence the existence of the dominant language and make a path for creating their own language. The impact of their writings at present is dominant in the world of entertainment such as film and novel.

In films, they use writing as a way of expressing a theme, a plot, or a film criticism. The expression gives them the direction and authority of what the films will be about. They can determine what society, culture, politics, or ideology they want to show. Film criticism is used to transmit feminine language that can or cannot be related to the dominant language. They want to show the men their past, present and future with their attempt to invite them to become bilingual.

In film, *After the Montreal Massacre* by Gerry Rogers, which was made to respond to the killing of 18 women in a polytechnic school in Montreal, Canada, we can see how women speak out about who they are. It portrays how the killer (a man) perceived women and how women perceived the men and themselves. *The Body Beautiful* by Ngozi Onwurah is another example that shows how women perceive their own bodies. It stresses that women should be proud of their own bodies even though there is something missing in them. It is filmed that a white woman who had her breast operated got married with a much younger black man and had two children.

Although women begin to express themselves in several types of films, they still have to fight for the recognition of who they really are in the pornographic representation. In this representation, women are not representing their ethnography (culture and experience) as they are, but they are represented as the object of male desire. The desire is expressed as the combination of pleasure and power that entwine around the fulfillment and knowledge. Woman's ethnography and sexuality are made or regulated to meet the needs of men who purposely make them to differentiate themselves from women. They make themselves the heroes while women function as the

helpers. Bill Nichols said, " Four different perspectives on the representation of the Other in fiction begins with the truism that fiction is a fabrication. With that premise we enter a realm in which the Other stands in a metaphorical relation to the culture from which it arises. (like everything else, Otherness too, is fabricated)" (199:204).

Pornography and ethnography share a discourse of domination. They represent the impulses of desire to know and posses. The cultural and historical facts of colonization, patriarchy, and masculinism are treated as contexts. The phallocentric order is planted in the pornography that is symbolized by the male desire and the universal status. The phallus is portrayed to show sexuality and power. Nichols stressed, " All men desire the same thing as signified by the activities of their penises. These socially constructed activities raise the organ to the level of signifier, the phallus. The phallus provides an index or standard of power or authority" (1991:211).

Basically, pornography degrades women by treating them as sexual beings.

The basic motives of representing it seem that women can be exploited; women can be laughed at; women are stupid; and women are available for sex. The values are shown to the world not to create better citizens but to make the values planted in their heads.

Many studies have proved that pornography has caused many negative attitudes toward women.

Starting from 1970s, the woman's movement began to gain a clear path to express their awareness of a new feminist criticism. The intellectual and social lives of women have flourished. They find the opportunities to be writers and critics of female works but not critics of male works. However, the chances have given them a new breath to produce a number of articles and books of feminist criticism. The identification with woman writers and their works shadowed by a sense of repression, trivialization, and misinterpretation of female texts lead to the improvement and elaboration of the images of women as readers.

Feminist critics believe that the male experience as reader is different from the female experience. They point out that the experience the male critics bring to a work in the form of critical language that the male writers think to be objective is indeed masculine. Female works, for a very long time, have been lost in the male world and purposely suppressed by the male critics for fear of losing their authority. With the growing number of feminist

works, the female writers feel more confident to practice the criticism as a political action. They do it to reinterpret the works of literature and change the awareness of the readers who read the works after modifying them. They focus their attention on the biographical criticisms, the invention of the works of the female authors, and the building of the literary and social concerns of female and male criticisms.

CONCLUSION

Every effort needs sacrifices, no matter how small or simple it is. Women have done some efforts to actualize themselves in order to show the world who they are, and to change the wrong images on them. Like any other struggle, they still have to keep fighting to clear their path so as to reach the land of equality and truth about themselves in the binary world of men and women. Despite their success in gaining the recognition, they still need to take a long flight to completely achieve their objectives because they face the problems that come not only from men but also from their own group.

Women seem to have to rectify the negative images on them. What men think of them in which they are made to believe should be corrected. The challenges are scattering around them . They need to remind the people that women are not like what men think but as women describe. This is, of course, time consuming and challenging because they face the human beings who have already been indoctrinated and want to maintain their status and domination. Women's success depends on their ways of convincing men. A drastic and direct change of phallocentric norms will perhaps give a strong impact on their efforts because they challenge a well and long established tradition. Their attempts to influence the people to read what they write, criticize, and revise would be profitable for them. They are expected to get involved in the areas they were widely exploited such as art and entertainment to play their role as the subject that can express themselves not as the object that cannot do anything. To do this, they are possibly in need of what men have established. They still need to keep working with men so as to make their criticisms and expressions heard.

In addition to that, feminists face the problem of their own group. Many women are still the followers of the patriarchal society and are unfamiliar with the feminist tracks. They believe that they are destined to be the ones who are constructed and made by the dominant world. They abide by the religious doctrines they grow up and the traditions and cultures they belong.

This is, I think, the most important thing feminists should fight first because without their realization of who they really are and what they want to be, their attempts to break the androcentric tradition will be in vain.

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