

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Problem

Literature is an oral or written work with a message, meaning, or significance and is the creation of human beings. Literary works are the result of the author's highest thoughts, in which there is beauty or aesthetics from what the author sees, feels, and experiences, either orally or in writing (Wellek and Warren, 1949: 3). As an author or writer of literary works, they can freely channel all their ideas and thoughts from what they see in daily life. For example, ideas about social criticism or criticism of the government, social phenomena in society, and conflicts that occur in society, both from the past and the present. These ideas or thoughts can be poured into a poem, a novel, a movie, music, and others.

Feminism is a social phenomenon that can be seen in society. Feminism involves a change in the way society views the roles and rights of women. Feminism is not only for women but also men, as feminism emerged in response to inequality between men and women and addressing discrimination to ensure that every man and woman has freedom. However, women frequently experience pressure and different treatment from men in social life. The existence of pressure and different treatment due to this gender, makes many women want to change the social view of women and want to prove to themselves that every woman has values for themselves. This social phenomenon of feminism can be found in a literary work, such as in the novel *The Poppy War* which shows how feminism brings freedom to the main character.

The novel comes from the Italian language, *novella*. According to Nugiyantoro (1998: 11), a novel has story elements that can build a conflict. The story elements in novels are generally long and detailed. They have complex conflicts. Generally, novelists base their plots on what they observe in everyday life or get inspired by past events. The novel “The Poppy War” is an example.

*The Poppy War* is a debut novel by Rebecca F. Kuang, published in 2018. Rebecca is an American fantasy author of Chinese descent. Rebecca was born in Guangzhou, China, and moved to America when she was four years old. Rebecca chose to major in Chinese Studies during her undergraduate studies at the University of Cambridge. In an interview following the release of her debut novel, Rebecca stated that her inspiration stemmed from China's history of the Opium Wars between the Qing Dynasty and the West. In addition, the conflict over the Nanjing Massacre or Rape of Nanjing was also one of Rebecca's inspirations for writing this novel.

*The Poppy War* tells the story of a young girl orphaned by the war and taken in by the Fang family. Fang Runnin, also known as Rin, becomes a shopkeeper's girl and does the Fang family's housework in exchange for living and being raised by the Fang family. One day, Uncle and Auntie Fang ask Rin to marry an old rich merchant whom Matchmaker Liew has arranged. However, Rin desires not to let anyone, including Uncle and Auntie Fang, determine the course of her life. Rin rejects the idea and thinks of ways to find a way out of what could be a dire fate for her life. Rin and her teacher, Tutor Feyrik, talk about it and Rin insists she will take the Keju Test, which Sineward, an elite military academy of the Nikan Empire, holds.

After convincing Tutor Feyrik, Rin decided to take the exam. Rin studied desperately to escape the arranged marriage she did not want. Rin finally passed and became the only person in Tikany to make it to Sineward. The eligibility attracted much attention because Tikany is an area inhabited mainly by farmers, indicating that Rin came from a poor village. Sineward is filling up with the sons of warlords, the sons of the rich, and the sons of important people, and Rin's escape touches a sentimental chord in their hearts. Her classmates ridiculed Rin because she came from a poor village and was also belittled because she was a girl. However, Rin did not give up. Rin learns various things independently and receives instruction from several masters in Sineward, including Master Jiang. Under Master Jiang's guidance, Rin learned something she had not known before she could summon the Gods.

This novel has social issues related to feminism in Rin's character. The existence of female stereotypes and underestimation makes Rin eager to show that she is capable and equal to others. Rebecca does not explicitly mention the time setting of this novel. However, Rebecca's inspiration for this novel is about the Opium War. The time setting of this novel takes place in the 18th century, which in this time setting is the starting point of the feminism movement in China. Therefore, I will analyze The Opium War more specifically through a sociological approach.

### **1.2 Identification of the Problem**

Based on the background of the problem above, I want to identify the problem through the character in *The Poppy War* about feminism, as seen by the main character, Rin, in the novel. Therefore, I assume that there are feminism values in *The Poppy War* novel.

### **1.3 Limitation of the Problem**

Based on the Identification of the problem above, this research focuses on analyzing the issue of feminism in the character Rin in the novel *The Poppy War*. I limit this research to the study of feminism theory through the sociological approach. I also employ the characterization through the third person point of view, setting, and plot as intrinsic approaches. For extrinsic approaches, I use the sociology of literature and feminism theory, gender inequality theory and gender and restriction of freedom theory.

### **1.4 Formulation of the Problem**

Based on the Limitations of the problem above, I formulate the problem as follows :

1. How is the ideology of liberal feminism are depicted in the character, plot, and setting by using third person point of view method in this research?
2. How is the theme of the novel that feminism contained in *The Poppy War* elaborated through intrinsic and extrinsic approaches?
3. How does the theory of feminism that appears in the novel support the theme of this research?

### 1.5 Objective of the Research

Based on the problem formulation above, the purpose of the research is to show that the theme of this novel is An Analysis of Liberal Feminism in *The Poppy War* novel using third person point of view method to analyze character traits. To achieve this goal, the following research stages are carried out :

1. To analyze the ideology of liberal feminism which are depicted in the character, plot, and setting by using third person point of view in supporting the theme of this research.
2. To develop the theme of the novel which contained feminism in *The Poppy War* elaborated through intrinsic and extrinsic approaches in support of the theme.
3. To analyze the theory of feminism that appears in the novel in supporting the theme of this research.

### 1.6 Benefit of the Research

This research is expected to be helpful for those who are interested in deepening their knowledge of related topics. This research may be helpful because it is through a new perspective and a sociology of literature approach. It is hoped that the results of this study will be open for further research.

### 1.7 Systematic Organization of the Research

According to the above title, the following is presented as follows

CHAPTER I: **INTRODUCTION**, consist of : Background of the Problem, Identification of the Problem, Limitation of the Problem, Formulation of the Problem, Objectives of the Problem, Benefit of the Research, Systematic Organization of the Research.

CHAPTER II: **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**, consists of: Explanation of concepts and theories. This chapter includes intrinsic and extrinsic approaches. In addition, research sources from previous studies that are relevant to the topic of this research.

CHAPTER III : **RESEARCH METHOD**, consists of : Time and Location, Research Approaches and Methods, Research Objects and Data, Data Collection Techniques, and Data Analysis Techniques.

CHAPTER IV: **AN ANALYSIS OF LIBERAL FEMINISM IN *THE POPPY WAR NOVEL BY REBECCA F. KUANG***, consists of: characterization of characters, plot, setting, and theme of the novel. In addition, a brief explanation and evidence of the concept on this research topic.

CHAPTER V : **CONCLUSION**, consist of: an evaluation of previous chapters and the implication of research results.

