GENDER EQUALITY
IN PEARL S BUCK’S PAVILION OF WOMEN NOVEL (1946)

PUBLICATION ARTICLE
Submitted to Fulfill One of the Requirements for the Completion of
Post Graduate Degree in Language Study Program

by
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ABSTRACT


This research aims at: (1) To describe the social condition of America and China in 1940. (2) To analyze the personal profile of Madame Wu in Buck’s Pavilion of Women novel. (3) To analyze gender equalities described in Buck’s Pavilion of Women novel.

The qualitative research is carried out by making use of the descriptive method. The researcher analyzes the data by using feminist perspective and sociology approach. The approaches are used for analyzing the gender equality in Buck’s Pavilion of Women novel.

Based on the result of the data analysis, the research unveils some gender equalities in the novel. The gender equalities found here are in aspects of women’s position, role and right. Aspect of rights are divided into right to control, access and participation.

Key words: Pavilion of Women novel, Madame Wu, Feminism, Gender Equality.
A. INTRODUCTION

Literature is used to express person’s idea in viewing life in the society. We can find some ideas, messages and portrait of a society by exploring it. It is the mirror of human life that portrays human feeling, though, imagination, and perception which can be viewed based on personal judgment.

Actually in some ways women are equal to men. But, in many societies women become the second. They are characterized as passive, dependent and emotional, whereas men are characterized as aggressive and active. Women have been subordinate to men in status, mobility and public leadership. They should do domestic sphere, nurturing children, maintaining the household and serving their husbands (Madsen, 2000:2).

Patriarchy is the structural and ideological system that perpetuates the privileging of masculinity. Such systems make women overlook their own marginal positions and feel instead secure, protected and valued. That marginalization has been accomplished, through men’s ability to define and control female sexual behavior. Women, according to this view, were valuable only on the basis of their ability to reproduce (Kuhlman, 2008: 21).

Since women have been treated as inferior they realize here that they have to do something. Thus, they can have equal right with other persons especially men. Therefore, they did a movement. According to Holman and Harmon (1986: 201) such movement is now called feminism movement.

Buck’s Pavilion of Women is a fairly radical approach to the subject of men and women in the decade of the 40s. It is the story of Madame Wu, a woman whose surprising decision to retire from married life and select a concubine for her husband upsets her extended household.

The novel is about a woman named Madame Wu. She lives in a patriarchal society which believes that a man is the head of a social unit. Actually, patriarchy itself means ruled by the male head of a social unit. However, feminist writers have used the concept to refer to the social system
of masculine domination over women. Buck here tried to show about a woman named Madame Wu that struggles to have the same right as men in some aspects of life. The male domination and Chinese culture force Madame Wu to be a woman that has no right to have a good education.

Madame Wu lived in the era of the Second World War when many foreigners came and visited China. It is also the era of women's movement in Europe and America. However, China still maintains their tradition and beliefs to restrict women. They believe that women are not allowed to work outside of the house because they do not have a smart brain like men.

Women just become wives that give birth, nurture the babies and do the household matters. It also happens to Madame Wu. She did and handled the household matters like choosing a wife for her sons, doing accounting, and designing the house. However, in her fortieth birthday she realized that she had to do something for her freedom from the restrictions.

Based on those aspects, the researcher would like to analyze the characteristics, symptoms and effects of feminism as shown in Pearl S Buck's *Pavilion of Women* novel, and the title is: **GENDER EQUALITY IN PEARL S BUCK'S PAVILION OF WOMEN NOVEL (1946).**

### B. Theoretical Foundation

Patriarchy literally means the father's rule. Originally, it was used to describe a male-dominated family - the large household of the patriarch which included women, junior men, children, slaves and domestic servants all under the rule of this dominant male. It is now used more generally to refer to male domination, to the power relationships by which men dominate women, and to characterize a system whereby women are kept subordinate in a number of ways (Bhasin in Abeda, 2011: 2).

Patriarchy refers to the male domination both in public and private spheres. Feminists mainly use the term 'patriarchy' to describe the power
relationship between men and women. Thus, patriarchy is more than just a term; feminists use it like a concept, and like all other concepts it is a tool to help us understand women’s realities.

In this patriarchal system, men and women behave, think, and aspire differently because they have been taught to think of masculinity and femininity in ways which condition difference. Patriarchal system shows in or accepts that men have, or should have; one set of qualities and characteristics, and women another such as masculine qualities (strength, bravery, fearlessness, dominance, competitiveness etc.), and feminine qualities (caring, nurturing, love, timidity, obedience etc.).

Actually, the male’s domination in patriarchal system is made by the male. And the male conditions the female as inferior, passive people, and subordinated human. The male usually uses the physical violence to make the female obey them and to control the female.

Naturally, women are conditioned as inferior. Example of the discrimination toward women is that women have smaller brains than men and less intelligence; they are more emotional and unstable. Women have been conditioned to believe that they are inferior to men, and they have assumed that it is a fact of nature (Montagu, 1953: 23).

In the past, gender discrimination was clearly seen as women are treated unfairly. Women themselves feel that they are weak and inferior. The feeling of weakness makes them much weaker. In most of the cultures women are considered to be a sort of lower being; a creature human enough, but not quite as human as the male (Montagu, 1953: 27).

In early feminism that is in the late nineteenth -and early twentieth-century there is a women movement called Liberal feminism. Liberal feminism is the women’s movement to gain individual freedom, and equality of opportunity and education is the weapon to gain them. The liberal emphasis on the individual stresses the importance of the individual and individual
autonomy which are protected by guaranteed right, economic justice, and equality of opportunity (Madsen, 2000: 35).

The liberal movement arose as the result of cultural and ideological construction about women. Gilman, as cited by Madsen, said that the fallacies that women want to be dependent on men, their ambitions and aspirations are less than men’s, they do not want education or professional attainment or live outside home, are exposed as the product of social condition that work to transform individual people into sexual stereotypes. Therefore, women want to have equal opportunity in many aspects of life such as having job, good education, etc (Madsen, 2000: 41).

A great deal of feminism is to break the silence on women: disentangling the supposed unities of the family that conceal relationships of power and subordination; identifying new issues that arise when we turn from the abstractions of humanity to put the spotlight on women themselves; drawing attention to conflicts of interest between the sexes; battling on behalf of women’s rights or needs. In one particularly strong formulation of this is that our understanding of citizenship has to be reformulated to open up space for two figures: one masculine, one feminine. Instead, that is, of subsuming women under the false universalisms of humanity, feminists have sought to reframe views on freedom, equality, or democracy with the knowledge that there are both women and men (Susan and Palmer, 2002: 12).

Buck’s Pavilion of Women novel is a story about a Chinese woman. The story and the characters are influenced by the Chinese culture. Therefore, this study is related to women in Chinese culture.

Baker (1979: 23) said that women in China had different attitude from men. In China, women were not considered important. While sons inherited equal shares of their father’s estate, daughters would inherit any properties or immovable goods at all. A girl had a big responsibility of the house-work at a very young age, while her brothers had a much longer and freer childhood.
The boys would be allowed to go to school while the girl rarely had such opportunity and they were illiterate.

Chinese traditional culture is much influenced by Confucius. The core of the Confucian value system was set of hierarchical relationships between people. For Confucian, harmony could only be achieved if people adhered to their position in the hierarchy, whether it is high or low. The essence of this system was that everyone was unequal. The harmony of life is the position of people in the hierarchy that is a father over sons or a husband over his wife (Smith, 1991: 34).

In Chinese marriage, Smith said that the instrumentalist underpinnings to matchmaking in China, whether performed by family members or official agencies, has produced a somewhat blasé attitude toward marriage among young people. In difficult times one should marry with a suitable match, not for perfect love. Love is not very important; therefore everyone can get married with someone without love (1991: 200).

Chinese women tried to hide their feelings. They do not want people to know about their feeling. They will hide their anger, love, or hate. It is a taboo thing to talk about love and sex. The tradition and habit influence the Chinese people, both men and women, to think and treat women as inferior individual. Women cannot do what men can do such as getting a job out of the house and getting good education. They just work at home and do the household matter like nurturing the children.

Pre-modern China, in the manner of agrarian societies, asserted the superiority of men over women, supporting that perception with its ethничal justifications, legal codes and customary practices. Female suffered infanticide and the crippling effect of bound feet and inferior nurturance in early childhood that produced a biased sex ratio, confinement to the home to prevent mixing with unrelated men, opposition to the remarriage of widows among elite and aspiring families, exclusion from the examination system,
from education in general and from the direct rewards of achievement in it (Hook, 1991: 95).

During the late of twentieth century, gender equality became a major issue in the world. In many societies, women and men are treated differently. Typically, women face various forms of discrimination that limit their ability to develop capabilities, enjoy freedom from violence and have the same social status as men.

Before talking about gender equality, we should understand first about gender. According to Inglehart (2003: 8) gender refers to the socially constructed roles and learned behavior of women and men associated with the biological characteristics of females and males. Talking about gender is talking about the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex.

Agassi (1989: 164) said that theories of gender equality are based on the assumption that all stereotyped social roles for men and women have to be abolished to achieve equal status. Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibility and opportunities of women and men. Such equality can be achieved when women and men enjoy the same rights and opportunities to all sectors in the society including economic, politic and when the different behaviors, aspirations and needs of them are equally valued and favored.

Gender equality does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. It means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities.
C. Research Methodology

The writer uses descriptive qualitative research to analyze this novel and other related data sources to support the subject matter. Cresswell (2007: 36) states that descriptive research is a kind of qualitative research in which the researcher describes the present status of people, attitude, and progress.

In this study, the writer focuses on analyzing the plot in Pavilion of Women novel. It is used to find the gender equality shown on the novel.

This study deals with one of Buck's novels entitled Pavilion of Women. For first time it was published in 1946 as a John Day Edition. In this case the writer uses Pavilion of Women novel that was published in 1975 by Pocket Book. This novel is divided into 15 chapters and consisted of 329 pages. This novel is over 2 million sold in United State. It also had been made as movie in America and shown all over the world. The author of the novel, Pearl S. Buck, who was born on the 26th of June 1892 in Hillsboro, West Virginia, in 1932 got a Pulitzer Prize and in 1938 a Nobel Prize in Literature.

This thesis uses descriptive qualitative method. There are two data sources in this research. The primary data sources is Buck's novels entitled Pavilion of Women. It was first published in 1946 as a John Day Edition. In this case the writer uses Pavilion of Women novel that was published in 1975 by Pocket Book. This novel is divided into 15 chapters and consisted of 329 pages. And the theory and also the approach, as the secondary data sources.

The data collection is done through documentation of library research. The documentation, based on John W Creswell (2007: 118) is a kind of data collection which uses all of the data sources, the primary and secondary data analyze. There are some steps used by the writer in collecting the data, those are reading the novel and finding out the important sentence on the dialogues, reading the books that are related to the research, browsing to the internet to get some information, such as articles, journal, essays and etc, that are related to the research, finding out the important data, analyzing the data,
arranging the important data based on its, developing the data that are provided and making conclusion on the data.

The first problem in this study is about understanding the character of Madame Wu as the main character in the novel, *Pavilion of Women*. The second is about the experiences of Madame Wu in patriarchal culture. To answer this question the writer applies the Feminist theories. This is also supported by the background of Chinese culture which helps the writer to understand the women’s restriction in Chinese culture. After understanding the culture, the writer will try to find the idea on gender equality described by the author of this novel.

The last is about the sociology. Here the sociological approach will be used. By the sociological approach, the writer shows the sociological aspects of this novel they are; social, economic, political, cultural, science and technology, and religious aspect.

D. Finding and Discussion

*Pavilion of Women* is one of Pearl S. Buck’s novels. This novel tells the story of a Chinese woman named Madame Wu who lives and gets married with a rich man. As a Chinese woman, she has to obey the rule and the Chinese tradition.

The first is about the presentation of Madame Wu in Buck’s *Pavilion of Women*. It can be concluded from the explanation above that Madame Wu is a Chinese woman that lives in an old-fashioned family. Her parents match her with the only son of a rich family, Mr. Wu. Then she lives with her husband in the Wu’s family house and had four sons. They are Liangmo, Tsemo, Fengmo and Yenmo. Madame Wu serves her husband well. She does all of her duties as a wife and a mother well.

Madame Wu is a woman who blessed with a beautiful physical appearance. She has beautiful frame, long hair, sharp eyes, beautiful cheeks,
narrow hand, little narrow feet and slender figure, though she is already forty years old. Her beautiful physical appearance is almost perfect. It makes her look so young in forty.

As said in the description, Madame Wu is described as an intelligent woman. She likes reading and learning. She is also depicted as wise, ingenious, astute, competent, sensible and rational woman.

She is also a perfect wife because of bearing sons, an adorable and care mother for her sons and a good daughter-in-law for her parents-in-law. She has good moral qualities. She is moral, kind, honest and kind. She is also kind of an honorable woman. Madame Wu is also confident and idealistic. She believes herself that she knows what to do and what to think about. Then, her wisdom is trusted by her first son to choose a bride for him. Madame Wu is also portrayed as a brave and firm woman. In the novel, Madame Wu decides to take a concubine for her husband though she knows that this action breaks the traditions. It shows that she is brave. Her idealistic is shown when she tries to insist her husband to accept her decision. She also cannot be influenced by anyone even her daughter-in-law in canceling the decision. It also can be seen in when she decides a woman for her third son. She believes that her third son will accept the betrothal.

As a Chinese woman, Madame Wu has the criteria of being hospitable, congenial as a good wife. It is seen through her polite attitude, and capability to do all household matters. Madame Wu is also recognized perfect because she can bear sons who carry on the family name. Madame Wu is also kind of courteous woman.

From the explanation above, we can say that Madame Wu can play well on her role as a good woman, wife and mother. As explained in cultural aspect in china, a Chinese woman must be a good wife and loving mother. Those are criteria of an ideal woman at that age. Therefore, we can conclude that Madame Wu is an Ideal Woman.
In the novel Pavilion of Women, the main character of Madame Wu described as a woman who faithfully serves her husband. Madame Wu has the highest female position in the Wu family. Similarly, her husband, Mr. Wu, has a highest position man in the Wu family. Madame Wu is the head of the domestic environment while Mr. Wu heads the affairs outside the home. It shows that Madame Wu has equal position with her husband, just different in scope.

Madame Wu is also described as a perfect wife because she can manage all the domestic routines and the most important thing is that she can bear sons to continue the family name. At that time, a wife could be categorized as ideal when she could be a good wife and loving mother. Therefore, she was a perfect woman.

Madame Wu has the same access like men inside the family. She can read the books inside the library without any restriction. Madame Wu is also a care and adorable mother for her sons. She cares and concerns in her sons’ education and marriage. She chooses the best education and wives for her sons. It shows that she is a care and good mother. She also manages and controls the management of the house of Wu. Those mean that Madame Wu has a same right to access, greater right to control and same right for participation.

Pearl S Buck tried to give a description of Chinese women life by using this novel. As she spent many years in China, she could give a well description of women life there. The patriarchal condition in China at that time seemed wrong for her and she wanted to expose it hoping that there would be a change for such condition.

By using Madame Wu as the central character on the novel, Buck wanted to show that Chinese women should do things as Madame Wu did. Buck also wanted to show that women and men have equal right in some aspects of life. A woman could do job as man such as managing house, accounting and
controlling the inferior if she got a chance. A woman also could be an intellect one if her family gave her opportunity to get education. Even, in the story, Buck showed that a woman could be much wiser than a man.

Pearl S Buck also a vocal supporter of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. She also became an advocate of cross-cultural understanding and racial harmony as a means of achieving world peace. As an activist of civil rights movement in USA, she wanted to share idea on equality of women rights. She saw much about women’s life in patriarchy society, in China, and did not want it to continue growing. She wanted that Chinese women should struggle on their own right so that they could decide the life they wanted to live on.

The Pavilion of Women novel was first published in United States where Buck spent her life after leaving China in 1930s. As an advocate of cross-cultural understanding, Buck also wanted to give a description of Chinese life using such novel. She wanted to show the life and culture of China so that people would understand more about it.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


