



Woman's Suppression in *Azab dan Sengsara*: A Feminist Perspective

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Abstract

Azab dan Sengsara is an Indonesian novel written by Merari Siregar (1921), one of the famous roman novelists in Indonesia in *Balai Pustaka* era. The novel is a material object of the present study. The study aims at revealing oppression, violence, exploitation of woman and all varieties of injustice to woman, revealing social symptoms ideological forms containing in the novel as a manifestation of a company condition in old era. This research uses a qualitative method and approaches of literary feminist and literary sociology as its support. This research succeeds in answering the problems of woman life, as manifestation of real life which reflects kinds of woman's life in society of Indonesian, for example: marriage, custom, violence, etc. for the hero "Mariamin" (a woman). She is the manifestation of the authority life, besides talking on oppression of woman images of its community lives. The author succeeded offering solutions with various contradictions, conflicts, handling down the novel as manifestation in real life.

Keywords: feminist, ideology, violence, custom, marriage

Introduction

Azab dan Sengsara novel is the first Indonesian modern romance, written by Merari Siregar, published in 1921 by *Balai Pustaka* (Pradopo, 1995). This novel is very interesting to read, and to analyze, not only by readers but also by researchers. In this research, researcher seeks to study from feminism perspective, where in this novel, the women position and their issue as individual, as family and as a part of society are presented.

The basic thought in literary research with feminist perspective is the researcher's intention to understand the position and the role of women as reflected in the novel *Azab dan Sengsara*, where in that condition, the society still do not understand fully the meaning of emancipation, feminism, and gender equality. In this research, the focus is on the oppression to a woman till her death. The tragedy in her life is experienced from teenage till her adulthood. The sad story begins with the death of her father, from that time, her happiness as a teenager (Mariamin) is taken away. The loss of her boyfriend, the life's trial which always come to her, make her grown up. This woman character becomes the subject of this research with feminist perspective approach.

As a modern novel on its growing period, the 1920's, where the theme are around the same big idea, which is the challenging of old tradition, and youthful problem reflected in force marriage, and the important of the education for the nation awakening to stay away from stupidity (Retnaningsih 1983 : 113-119). But the effort to challenge the force marriage, and women discrimination is not appear yet, but it is implied within that there is an effort to gain equality of education between women and men.

Why woman? Because woman apparently interesting to discuss. Women is a figure with two sides. In one side, woman is a beauty. The beauty can attract man. In the other side, woman is seen vulnerable. And the strange thing is this vulnerability become man's excuse for a bad intention man to exploit the beauty (Sugihastuti, 2002: 32). Aristotle (Selden, 1991:135) argues that woman is a gender which determined by their lack of a specific quality. St. Thomas Aquinas (Selden, 1991:135) states that woman is an imperfect man.

Gender is the man and woman division of character based on socio-cultural aspect. Nevertheless, many of us are misunderstood, and consider gender as unchanged destiny.

The woman discrimination in the novel *Azab dan Sengsara* is a force marriage, the limitation of education for girls, and the violence to woman. Based on the story or others, girl or boy must accept whoever mate appointed by their parent. There is an opinion that whatever determined by parents, according to belief, will also bring a good benefit. Parents never thought that this oppression will leave a scar and will ruin their children's future.

This research aims to identify moral values in the novel, particularly aimed to woman in related to feminist perspective, and furthermore, as the role of feminism in literary study, *Azab dan Sengsara* is chosen.

The novel *Azab dan Sengsara* is chosen in this research because this is the first *Balai Pustaka* novel that was widely known, and this novel also bring the topic of how woman is treated, not only as individual but also as a part of society, and bring the Tapanuli tradition, marriage, traditional rules and customs.

The synopsis of Azab dan Sengsara

Love affair between the cousins, Mariamin and Aminuddin, occurs since they always spend time together from the childhood. Mariamin's mother approve the relation because Aminuddin is a well-behaved boy, after all, Nuria wants that her daughter can live happily and not live in poor.

Aminuddin's father is the chief of village, a rich royal and is respected by his subordinate because of his noble and his diligent. His father is *Baginda Diatas*, which character was carried away also by his son. On the other hand, Mariamin family is a poor family which caused by her late father character which is a gambler, temperamental, selfish and a harsh talk person. Because of these behaviors, Mariamin family becomes poor. Till his death, Tohir (Sutan Baringin) experience a hard life with his wife Nuria. *Baginda Diatas'* wife is Sultan Baringin sister.

Mariamin and Aminuddin love relationship blossoms, when one day Mariamin slipped from a bamboo bridge. Swiftly, Aminuddin jumps into the river and saves Mariamin's life. Mariamin is saved, and feel debt of gratitude to her cousin.

Their love relationship though, is not approved by *Baginda Diatas* because Mariamin's family is a poor family and is not from a royal family. One day Aminuddin leaves Sipirok and goes to Deli (Medan) to work with a promise to his lover that one day when he is capable to financially support his future wife, he will marry her.

After Aminuddin left, Muraimin frequently sends letter to Aminuddin, and he always sends letter back to her. She always refused the marriage proposal from other man because his faithfulness to Aminuddin.

After securing a job in Medan, Aminuddin send a letter to Mariamin to aks her to join him in Medan, to become his wife. The news also sent to Aminuddin parents, and Aminuddin's mother approve her son's plan, but, *Baginda Diatas*, to avoid hurt his wife's feeling, secretly goes to a shaman to ask who is his son actual future wife. *Baginda Diatas* of course do not approve his son's relationship with Mariamin, therefore, he tells his wife that according to a shaman that he met, Aminuddin's future wife is not Mariamin, but a beautiful and rich woman who is a daughter of another village chief.

Without Aminuddin's acknowledgement, *Baginda Diatas* brings the future wife to Medan to meet Aminuddin. Aminuddin is very upset to have his future wife against his will, but he could not challenge his father's will and the tradition held by his community. Aminuddin then send a letter to Mariamin and tell her about his marriage that he hasn't choose and he asks for apology to Mariamin and aks her to be patient.

Mariamin becomes ill because her love is deterred. One day *Baginda Diatas* comes to Mariamin's house to ask for apology and to regret for what he has done

after knowing Mariamin's good conduct.

A few months later Mariamin is married with a clerk she has just known, named Kasibun. It is later known that Kasibun has just divorced his wife in Medan to marry her. Along with Kasibun, Mariamin moves to Medan.

One day Aminuddin visits Mariamin at her house. The visit make Mariamin unconscious which triggers suspicion and jealousy from Kasibun. Kasibun then torture her relentlessly that make Mariamin could not stand to live longer with her husband. She then reports him to police and file a report.

Kasibun is proven guilty and has to pay a twenty five rupiahs fine and he has to let Mariamin file a divorce. Mariamin is very sad and returns to her mother's house in Sipirok. She is very thin and is always unhealthy until eventually she passes away miser-ably.

Problem Formulation

The formulation of the problem in this research is about a woman character in *Azab dan Sengsara* novel. Her role related to tradition, marriage, and how the gender problem toward woman, how woman state in relation with the dominant elements discussed as an idea or feminism ideology. Related to feminism, what are the aspects that are found in *Azab dan Sengsara* novel?

Feminist Perspective

Feminism is a theory about the equality between man and woman in politics, economy and social, or any other organized activity which fight the rights and the woman's interests (Goefe, 1986:837). Similar with other ideology, feminism is a cultural phenomenon that must be taken into consideration and at the same time is continue to become questionable critically for its basic of argumentation. The reason for its emergence, particularly if it is viewed from modern perspective is based on the unsatisfactory condition toward the reality which is considered patriarchal construction. This reaction clearly is the form of protest both theoretically and practically, because the patriarchal reality construction has subordinated women and has deterred woman's existence, whereas that protest is not merely comes from women themselves, but is also done by man, which is they who intend and fight for human rights (Awuy, 2002). However those reactions are an irony, since until now, there has not been any feminism act which purely independent or "original" as far as it is moving around the modernism circle (Awuy, 2002).

What is feminism? Lexically, Moeliono (1993:241) states that feminism is a women's movement which demands the full rights equality between women and man. The rights equality includes all aspects in life, which is politic, economy, and social culture (Djajanegara, 1995: 16). In other words, feminism is a women's

movement to gain autonomy and freedom to determine their own state.

Furthermore, it is worth noted that feminism is not a rebel movement against men, or it is also not an effort to challenge the social norms such as marriage, or to refuse their fate (Fakih, 1997:79) but, it is an effort to end the repression and women exploitation (Fakih, 1997:79). The target of feminism then is not merely gender issue, but extends to “humanity” or fight for human rights (Awuy, 1995:88).

Whatever the ideology of feminism and wherever it emerges, it emerges as the effect of gender prejudice which tends to put a woman after a man. Masculine gender is always for men, while feminine gender is always for female. Woman has the property of tender, beautiful, emotional, and motherhood; while man has the property of strong, rational and brave. Many cross cultural study show that this dichotomy cause woman is always subordinated (Fakih, 1997: 7-8).

Apart from those above, there are some ideologies and other feminism ideas, such as liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, radical feminism, social feminism, psychoanalytic feminism, and existential feminism.

Liberal feminism is an ideology which is built over an influence of John Locke opinion (Two treaties of Government), its emergence is intended to ruin the repression tyranny of an institution toward human. This Locke ideology is known as “individual freedom” in social and nation’s life. On the other point of view, as a rational living creatures, human (both men and women –according to Locke– must gain an equal education (Awuy, 2002). Whereas Jean Jacques Rousseau opinion (Emil) who states that basically, the woman’s rational ability is far below man, which makes popularization that men on their fate is a rational creatures, whereas women’s fate as an emotional creatures. Wollstonecraft argues that in decision making, woman must own her autonomy. John Mill (The Subjection of Woman) argues that gender construction based on nature which positioning women as subordination of men , cannot seen as “social creation”, but highlight individual desire to reach happiness and pleasure in morality, and freedom equality among citizen, and economic benefit.

Mill further highlight the conviction that education can resolve every aspects, including economy and family, whereas Taylor puts more attention to “partnership, according to Taylor, women have at least three options, decide to become a wife and housewife in one hand, or to became a creed woman in the other hand, and the third to have a career for her domestic career. Taylor also affirms that marriage will only fair if it first admits that with her ability, a woman will have a real chance to choose not to marry, second to choose to marry, woman must have a faith and bound economically that she is able to support family. While according to Awuy (in Rosmarie Tong), the radical feminism theory seeks further from the attention, men has been trying to take control over women’s body, i.e.: sexual harassment, pornography, etc. Second, explicitly articulate women’s sexuality to serve needs, and it is not for women’s interests but for men’s interests.

Radical feminism put its attention to a theme such as reproduction and motherhood, gender and sexuality. Whereas, socialism aims at creating equal social status for each individual.

From several feminism thoughts described above that in reality feminism is a matter of gender. This phenomenon is more to social cultural construction than scientifically emerged, where feminism has fought to give freedom to women's existence from patriarchal social cultural repression. According to Awuy in Simone de Beauvoir which states her role in inspiring the "women's liberation" movement in 1960's.

From above explanation on feminism perspective which become the theoretical foundation in solving the problem in *Azab dan Sengsara* nove.

Women's Supression

Women and Gender Issue

As described in earlier section of this research that in *Azab dan Sengsara* novel, it contains many women's related issue and their position as individual, in family, and in social life. Those problems experienced, is inseparable from feminism point of view that closely tight with gender issue.

Community as described in *Azab dan Sengsara* novel experienced many unresolved problems. In society, there has been a incorrect conviction toward gender. What is considered gender is constructed trough social cultural perspective and viewed as God's destiny (Fakih, 1997: 10-11). Gender is not God's creation but it is society's creation. In *Azab dan Sengsara* novel, its society views a wife does not have any right to involve in her husbands' affair, because women is considered only to take care house affair.

"Memberi ingat suami pun tiada berani lagi ia, sejak Sultan Baringin membentak dia dengan perkataan: Diam kau: perempuan tiada patut mencampuri perkara laki-laki, dapur sajalah bagian kau"

(She doesn't even have any courage to remind her husband, not since Sultan Baringin shouts at her and says: You, Shut Up; a woman should not involve in her husband's business, you should just take care the kitchen")

From the excerpt above, it can be seen that according to John Mill (The Subjection of Woman), he states that gender construction where women's position has always become men's subordination, and it is described in *Azab dan Sengsara* novel, where it is a woman's duty to please her husband, she should show her smile when her husband is angry, so the frowning forehead become clean (Page 25), although it is also man's duty to please his wife, so woman not misperceived her position.

Furthermore, as shown from society in *Azab dan Sengsara* novel, they have

already had an awareness in education, but it is gender asymmetric. Although from liberal feminism of John Locke, both man and woman have the same rights to access education (Awuy, 2002). The relation to this can be seen in excerpt below:

“Setelah Mariamin berumur tujuh tahun, iapun diserahkan orang tuanya ke sekolah. Meskipun bapaknya orang kampung saja, tahulah juga mereka itu anak-anak perempuan pun harus disekolahkan. Ia harus tahu membaca dan menulis, mengira dan menghitung, sebagaimana teman-temannya anak laki-laki. Bukan maksudnya supaya kepintarannya menyamai laki-laki, tetapi”(Page 34)

(After Mariamin is seven years old, her parents enroll her to school, Although her father is only a man from village, but they are still aware that a girl should also goes to school. She must know how to read and write, and to count, as her male friends. It is not the intention that her bright will exceed a boy, but...)

This view that put women become an object of oppression which do not receive their rights as an autonomous human being, it doesn't reflect the freedom in every way they take. Although Mill's liberal feminism puts a great attention to a faith that education can resolve all matters, including economy and family. In this case, it is not in line with the "individual freedom" in social and nation's life (John Locke, 1960). Society views that female gender is considered to be in lower class than male gender and can only resolve the domestic problem. Women are not allowed to have a higher education, be able to write and to read is just enough, and those even only to serve her husband, so she can manage the house.

“Riam, rupanya kau memandang laki-laki itu manusia yang tinggi daripada perempuan?”

“Memang”, sarut Mariamin dengan segera.

“Kalau saya laki-laki, tentu hari muda ku boleh aku kelah pergi kesana-sini, pergi ke negeri orang merantau ke Deli akan mencari pekerjaan. Lain halnya kami perempuan. Perempuan harus tinggal dirumah, tiada boleh acapkali keluar-luar, kalau sudah besar (Page 38).

“Riam (Miriam), so you think men have a higher position the women?”

“Yes, they do”. Mariamin replies promptly.

“If I were a man, once I am adult, I would have gone here and there, have gone to other places, have gone to Deli to looking for a job. But it is different as a woman, we must stay at home, and not allowed to leave home frequently when we reach teen age”

That is how women's state is described, since very early age, they have lived with a conviction that men have a higher position than women, in education, in occupation, all have a boundary which triggered from a gender issue. A women becomes stupid because can only gain education just to be able read and write (p. 39). Worsley (1992:140) states that the lacks of women's intellectuality is caused by the life retardant and the limitation of their formal education level.

The poor woman can only work in domestic sector, such as cooking, taking care children, serving her husband, waiting for her husband comes home and to have meals together, although the wife in hunger, knitting, all of those are woman's duties. All of those duties receive no payment and are not even considered as a job. Women received this disadvantages caused by a stereotype given (p.78). Worsley (1992:42) states this as forced domesticities. Within this kind of society as described in *Azab dan Sengsara*, almost viewed that women is still not considered as valuable human in men's eye, they are only an object to satisfy men's physical and mental needs.

Those are some manifestation of gender injustice which is inseparable among one element to each other because one element influences each other dialectically (Fakih, 1977: 12). This can be seen by analyzing gender issues in social life described in *Azab dan Sengsara*. Initiated from tradition, gender issues create women's stereotype. Women are viewed as a weak and contemptible. Thus, their role in society is not considered, an important role is not even given to them. The education aspects is also subordinate them, cause them to be unintelligent. Because their unintelligence, Men are easily use them and abuse them (husband and men's community).

Furthermore, this injustice is also seen in social leveling, social disparity. Even a beautiful woman, but in society as described in *Azab dan Sengsara*, it doesn't change the view that a poor woman is not allowed to pair with the rich, even they love each other. This is related with Frederich Engels (The origin of the family, Private Property, and The state) that the basic practice of feminism is Marxism ideology, the origin of family described as a social reality that determined by economy production model that results the change of family position. But in this case, it is women who are always become the victim.

"Mariamin, anak orang miskin akan menjadi isteri mereka itu? Tentu tak mungkin, karena tak patut! Bukankah orang itu telah hina dimata orang, lagi pula tak berada, boleh dikatakan orang yang semiskin-miskinnya didaerah Sipirok? Orang yang begitukah yang akan menjadi tunangan Aminuddin? O, sekali-kali tidak boleh; Aminuddin seorang anak muda, belum tahu ia membedakan bangsa, haruskah didengar permintaannya itu? Betul anak gadis itu bagus rupanya, lagi masuk kaum mereka juga, akan tetapi kaum tinggal kaum, perempuan yang elok gampang dicari".

(Mariamin, the daughter of a poor family that will become Aminuddin's wife? That's impossible, because it is improper! People has considered her contemptible, don't they? Moreover, she is poor, we can say she is the poorest in Sipirok? That kind of woman will be Aminuddin's future wife? O, not in a million years; Aminuddin is a young man, he still cannot see the difference, and do you think he should be heard? It is true that the woman is beautiful, and from the same race, but that is not the thing, many other beautiful women out there).

That excerpt above is actually far from gender issue, because the rich and the poor stigma is not the issue that differentiate men and women, but that view also comes from society's construction, that the poor is not to marry the rich.

From the explanation above on the application of gender and women issue, still cannot represent an expected feminism idea, but is only limited to perception or opinion that tries to fit randomly the feminism idea itself or the stereotype from some cases in *Azab dan Sengsara*. Although there is an effort to fight against it, but it is not enough, women are still suppressed and become object of misery.

Women's Position in Tradition and Marriage

In Tapanuli community as the setting in the novel *Azab dan Sengsara*, the power authority is on men or patriarchal. Therefore they subordinate women. It is correct that Haryati Soebadio (1984: 32) states that the description about women is basically apart from the sibling system. The real cause is the local society (Soebadio, 1984: 42). Generally, the social life in village (Sipirok village) which is far from cities still holds tightly the tradition elements.

In marriage, other than tradition rules, there is also religion's rules, as described that God creates man and woman Adam and Eve and both are ordered to live together, to help each other and to love each other (Page 59). Thus, that tradition is the rule to obey.

"Mereka itu memandang perkawinan itu suatu kebiasaan, yakni kalau anaknya yang perempuan sudah genap umurnya harus dijodohkan. Demikian pula jadinya pada anak laki-laki. Harusnya ia lekas dikawinkan, karena keaibanlah dimata orang banyak, kalau orang tua terlambat memperistrikan anaknya"

(They must view marriage as a practice, that if the girl has grown up, parents must find a man for her. It is also the same for a boy, he must be soon asked to get married. Otherwise, it will only bring disgrace for parents, if they don't ask their son to get married soon).

From the excerpt above, that in matchmaking and marriage, it is for both men and women. The urge to get married soon is not only for women, but also for men, that is how the tradition view they hold. It is worth noted that according to Taylor, a feminist, that a woman at least has three options, choose to become a wife and housewife, choose to become a career woman, or choose to have career for her domestic career. In *Azab dan Sengsara*, it is described that woman has no chance to avoid the tradition rules regarding to whom she should get married which becomes parents' decision. As described in excerpt below:

"Itu jangan anakda tentukan, karena riam masih anak-anak, ibulah yang lebih tahu akan hal itu. Dalam perkawinan, perkataan orang tualah yang berlaku, dan anak itu hanya menurut saja. Demikianlah yang biasa kejadian di antara bangsa kita. Misalnya banyak, umpamanya ibu sendiri. Tiadalah ibu ditanya nenekmu dahulu akan kesukaanku, tatkala ibu hendak di persuamikan. Tentang

perkawinan kami dengan mendiang ayahmu amatlah menyedihkan hati... (Page 115)

(It is not your decision, because you are still very young, this my decision as your mother who knows more about this. In Marriage, what your parents' decision, the kid will only obey that. That's the common practice in our community. Many example, myself for instance, your grandma never asked me who the one I love was when I was to get married, so about my marriage with your father, it was so heartbroken).

Furthermore it is told that Mariamin's mother will not force her daughter, she just gives Mariamin an advice because she is still young, because if she is forced, it will only result a regret, it is also told that doesn't it real that a forced marriage is not correct? (Page 115). Thus, from that explanation there is still a tolerance or a kind of emancipation which tries to challenge what is now considered not correct, what has happened to Mariamin's mother, should not be the same to Mariamin, it is reflected from what Mariamin's mother states that what she experienced during her marriage life is a result of the forced marriage. To cover this issue, as argued by radical feminist Betty Friedan (*The Feminim Mystique, The Second Stage*). Fredan refuses the traditional view about women that a woman will only become a normal personality when she becomes a good wife, thus, she does not need to work outside her house, and views that marriage and family is a part of her life but not the whole part (Awuy, 2002)

In the society in *Azab dan Sengsara* novel, they still view the traditional opinion that when the parents want to find the future spouse for their child, they must seek an advice from a *Datuk* or a shaman, it is also the case with livelihood and fortune. As what Aminuddin's father does when he is to consider Mariamin who is loved by Aminuddin, Aminuddin's father views that this *Datuk* is the one who know the best, that they are not a match, and according to him, Aminuddin should find someone else (Page 123). This is the tradition belief that put Mariamin in misery, and breaks her heart, as what *Datuk* says below:

"Maksud itu kurang baik. Awalnya laki isteri selamat dan beruntung. Lepas dua tahun, lahir seorang anak laki-laki, tetapi baru ia berusia tujuh tahun, ayahnya meninggal dunia". Kata datuk itu lambat-lambat tetapi terang dan nyata suaranya." (Page 123).

(That intention – Aminuddin to marry Mariamin – is not a good thing to do. At first, both of them are fine and will have a fortune. After two years of their marriage, they will have a boy, but when boy is seven years old, his father passes away". The *Datuk* says slowly but with a real and clear voice).

That is why Aminuddin's father disapprove the marriage, apart from that Mariamin is from the poor family, while he is the rich family. As described earlier, (Page 122), this view is a reflection of the lack of education, the conventional view that they still believe in mystical belief, whereas education should be able to lift their moral and sense to form a rational behavior based on discipline and religious rules (Sukanti-Suryochondro, 1995:33)

The view of marriage, in Bataknese society, tradition is still strongly held until nowadays, especially in terms of family name or race. They are not to take any of man or woman which has the same family name, but for a boy with Siregar family name can marry to Harahap family name, even that marriage with a girl still closely related. Therefore, only difference in family name, although still relatives; but because of that tradition view, only the second marriage is allowed in that rule, not in the first marriage, that prohibition brings curiosity (page 26), whereas it is not religion (Islam) that prohibits this practice, it is the tradition that puts the woman in this unfair situation. This view that need to be addressed with socialization feminism that aims to create an equal social status among every individual (Awuy, 2002). Furthermore, it is also mentioned that during nowadays, those view should not be held anymore, it should be change, and dispose of the unfair views (Page 126)

In related to bride price in Batak land, that is called *Boli*, it is a burden. Boli is a price to be given by a groom to the bride's parents (page 127). Therefore, it is commonly viewed woman as a product as result of that tradition, because bargaining process is involved to determine Boli. The marriage even delayed or cancelled because no agreement on the amount of Boli.

"Kasralah didengar ditelinga, bila orang berkata "Ditengah-tengah pulau Sumatera yang besar itu masih ada orang menjual anaknya yang perempuan" (Page 127)

(It is very rude to hear people say "in the middle of the big Sumatera Island, there are still parents who sold their daughter)

That view still exists. If parents want to plan a wedding, Boli is the subject to discuss first, the wedding oath becomes the second thing to consider, whereas that should be the primary thing (Page 127). Similar to radical feminism which implicitly exploits woman, as seen in *Azab dan Sengsara*. This view has triggered the patriarchal society that showcase the man in power, and subordinate woman because a man has considered that he has paid the woman to be his bride. Thus, that woman should obey anyone who becomes her husband.

"Kawin artinya si laki mengambil perempuan, sebab ia perlu kepadanya, oleh sebab itu orang ada gunanya bagi dia, haruslah dia menyediakan belanja bagi isterinya. Itu sajalah kewajiban si laki kepada isteri. Tetapi perempuan itu harus menyerahkan badan dan hatinya kepada suaminya. Adalah kewajiban bagi dia mengusahakan dirinya untuk kesenangan lakinya, karena lakinya mengambil dia untuk kesenangannya".

(Marriage means the man takes the woman, because he needs her, and she is useful for him, the husband must support his wife financially, that is all the husband responsibilities to his wife. But a woman should surrender her body and her heart to her husband. It is her duty to do everything to please her husband, because he has taken her for his pleasure).

That view is an irony, that the women's status in this case as if women is a product for men's pleasure, the marriage is made for the benefit of men which is patriarchal and subordinate women, make a woman as reproducer and men as producer. It seems very difficult for women in this situation that even they work outside home, financially, it is a benefit for men, and therefore it is also an exploitation (Awuy, 2002).

The view that tradition determines the women's status in *Azab dan Sengsara* society is very clear, but nowadays there has been an effort to change the view, as described, that what is good should be preserved, and what is bad should be changed although that is a tradition (Page 126). These are the feminism view that is to be connected with tradition, marriage in women's life s.

Mariamin Position as Woman in Family

Wherever women exist, they are always interesting to discuss. Women are an individual with two sides. In one side, a woman is beauty. The charm can make man falls in love. In the other side, Women are considered weak, irrational, sensitive, and other terms addressed to them. St. Thomas Aquinas (Seiden, 1991 : 135) states that women is the imperfect men, and there are many other perceptions about women, but what is discussed in this research is the Mariamin character from the novel *Azab dan Sengsara*.

Mariamin is the main character in the novel *Azab dan Sengsara* who experiences much oppression from people around her. When she is teenage, her happiness is taken away, because her father passes away, soon after that, her lover also leaves her. When she is adult, she was married with the one that she does not love, until the end of her life. As a woman in her society, Mariamin at that time has not had any effort to fight against the operation, let alone to refuse oppressions in her life. She does not know what emancipation or feminism is, as described that Mariamin goes to school when she is seven years old... (Page 34) but only to be able to write and to read, it only aims to support her future husband, because a woman should not exceed a man in education. Therefore, the oppression in her education is not match with John Locke's feminism ideology that introduces "individual freedom" (Awuy, 2002) in terms of education, men and women are equal.'

Once Mariamin reach her teen age, Aminuddin leaves her. This is unavoidable, since she is not a man, who can go everywhere she wants to find a job, whereas a woman at least ends up in kitchen (Page 37-38). Although there is an effort to maintain her relationship with Aminuddin, but in the end it does not continue, because of her poor, that Aminuddins' parents do not approve their relationship (Page 122), this oppression has broken her heart, but no matter how bitter it is, she must go through it (Page 140) as in radical feminism view that the economy factor put women in effortless situation. Mariamin who her rights to happy has been taken away by Aminuddin's parents, is faced with Aminuddin parents, where she should act again her will, and to show her smile and her respect to them, although it is them who has ruined her dream (Page 142). As described in the following excerpt:

“Mariamin, meskipun ia beroleh emas dan perak atau apapun yang lain, akan tetapi barang yang amat diinginkannya itu tetap juga hilang, selama hidupnya”. (Page 142)

(“Even Mariamin has gold and silver or any other valuables, but the thing she wants very much is missing, for the rest of her life”)

In her paint, she still able to response Aminuddin’s letter who has married with other woman, as described below:

*“Ya, apa disesal kepada tuan.
Puan suasu tempaan bantan.
Apa sesal kepada tuan.
Nasib itu pendapatan badan...
(Page 143).*

“Maklumlah kakanda Aminuddin, bagaimana penderitaan adinda ini, ya. Perempuan itu mem-punyai perasaan lebih halus, dan luka hatinya itu tiada mudah sembuh, sebagai laki-laki. Oleh sebab itu baiklah kita mem-biarkan yang sudah tinggal sudah, janganlah kita mengulang-ulangi dia” (Page 143)

(“You should understand Aminuddin, however my paint is, woman has a tender feeling, and her broken heart will not easily healed, different with a man. So, let’s just let it go, and not to bring that back”)

Those excerpts above describe suppressions experienced by Mariamin in her life without end. Then, Mariamin cannot refuse her mother’s request to marry her with a man she does not love.

“Kesudahannya ia kawin dengan seorang muda dari Padang Sidempuan, orang muda yang tiada dikenalnya, orang muda yang tiada dicintainya. Jodoh yang tak disukainya”. (Page 145)

(“After that she is married to a young man from Padang Sidempuan, a man she doesn’t know, a man she doesn’t love. A future husband she doesn’t like”).

This marriage does not put an end to her family misery, especially to her, it even cause more miseries, suppressions from her husband (Kasibun) is endless until her death. That is Mariamin’s fate as woman as described in *Azab dan Sengsara* who always becomes an object of suppressions, without her knowing about “individual freedom” in feminism view, without having any effort to fight against those suppressions. Even her death is caused by her misery and oppressions which she cannot refuse.

Conclusion

Azab dan Sengsara novel, written by Merari Siregar, tells a story about woman’s life and all of her issue. Although in that situation the society is still traditional and have conventional way of thinking, but the view to send a girl to school still limited, because woman should not exceed or even equal with man in education. As a woman who lives in suppressions in all aspects of her life, from tradition, religion, education, and occupational, and even more in marriage.

The gender problem where there is still a disparity between men and women, this discrimination has subordinated women. Women considered as a second class group. All of the violent and oppressions to women is considered common and legal. In terms of occupational, women are not allowed to work outside, and

can only stay home as housewife, take care their children, breastfeed them, serve their husband. In terms of education for instance, Mariamin can only read and write, this ven is only to support her husband.

In gender issue, women are considered weak, sensitive and unintelligent, while men are considered strong, and have the rights to give order to women. As the conclusion to this research, the suppressions to women is triggered by the traditional gender view, poverty, and the force marriage which is bound to traditional rules.

Other than gender issue, tradition and marriage limit the women's movement, Nuria – wife of Sutan Baringin – has to accept the force marriage arranged by her parents because according to their tradition, she cannot refuse, this put her suppressed and in pain, and receive painful treatment from her husband.

Then Mariamin as a woman in family, who lost her happiness after her father passed away, and who has her dream ruined after her lover leaves her because suppression from Aminuddin's parents, who see her poverty that her effort to be able to unite with the one she loves is put to an end.

As a result, Mariamin is forced to marry to Kasibun, a bad-tempered man, and an ill person. This situation cause Mariamin experience suppression and misery till her death. It is also caused by her mother's will who force her to marry with the man she does not love.

It is clear what woman experience during that period, in *Azab dan Sengsara*, women still have no effort to fight for their rights for emancipation and feminism movement, the effort is only limited to education which is also limited not to equal with men.

Finally, according to researcher, *Azab dan Sengsara* novel is still not considered feminism, what is told from the woman character is a condition where she has no effort to avoid all oppression in all aspects of her life.

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