

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 The Background of the Research

In the history of human race, women have taken their own role as a significant part of history. However, almost in every aspect, men appear to be stronger and more powerful than women, either physically or mentally. Men usually have control over women, dominate women and have power to force their own wills on women. Hooks in her book *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, identifies that “[w]omen who are most victimized by sexist oppression; women who are daily beaten down mentally, physically, and spiritually, women who are powerless to change their condition in life, they are a silent majority” (1984:1).

The stereotype above, that women are weaker and inferior to men, affects people’s mindset about women. Almost every society in the world has such stereotype of women. We can see it in the myth, legend, and even true story about women, where women are all secondary. Women are usually associated with evil and wicked description. It is found in ancient Greek mythology a wicked creature named Medusa, a woman. In his article “Medusa in Myth and Literary History” Brunel explains that:

Medusa in Christian symbolism represents the dreaded enemy and death. Thus she becomes an embodiment of the devil. In fact this is a female monster, the ‘ugly semblance’, which lives at the bottom of the river and on the other hand,

he said, that in the myth Medusa and her sisters came into the world with snakes on their heads, instead of hair, with yellow wings and brazen hands. Their bodies were also covered with impenetrable scales, and their very looks had the power of killing or turning to stones. (1996:par.1- 6)

Additionally, in American history, the one who used to be accused as the wicked witch are always women. Usually these witches use their power to hurt other people. As explained in Oxford dictionary, the witch is considered as wicked woman. She is a woman who is believed to have magical powers, especially to do evil things (2000:1547).

Those are how women are presented in negative stereotype in the history of human race that seems to be unfair for women. Moreover, Savitt in his article "Female Stereotype in Literature" (1982), mentions that:

Female characters in the story have held tightly to several role models as their guides. While male characters have been given free rein to be and become what they like, even to fail if they choose, on the other hand female characters have been written to play and re-play the same themes, limited as they are. Sometimes whenever the female characters deviate from the norm, there will be more attention and particular treatment to purify what that female character has done. (par. 1)

Another fact is that men are mostly encouraged to become men in both real life and fiction, but sadly, women are frequently opposed to rise and stand on their own feet for being a woman.

Female characters appear in many fictions including in the work of Indian author, Salman Rushdie. Rushdie is one of the famous writers among the finest writers of the world. He is from Mumbai and has won several awards, such as Man Booker Prize and Booker of the Booker. He has written many of the best novels along his career, and he also has a controversial novel entitled *The Satanic Verses*, that has changed his destiny.

This research, however, chooses *East, West* to be discussed. *East, West* is a collection of short stories. This work was published in 1994 during his exile in avoiding Khomeini's *Fatwa* against him, four years after the publication of *Haroun and The Sea of Story* and six years after *The Satanic Verses*. The book consists of three sections with three stories in each section. Robert Coover, in his review for *The New York Times* in [nytimes.com](http://nytimes.com) classifies the sections in the collection of short stories as thesis ("East"), antithesis ("West"), and a final synthesis ("East, West").

The writer has mentioned above that this collection of short stories has nine stories, which is divided into three sections. In section "East" there are "Good Advice is Rarer than Rubies", "The Free Radio", "The Prophet's Hair". In the second section "West" there are "Christopher Columbus and Queen Isabella of Spain Consummate Their", "Yorick" and "At the Auction of The Ruby Slipper". In the last section "East-West" there are "The Courter", "The Harmony of The Sphere", and "Chekov and

Zulu”. In this research, the writer does not take all stories to be discussed. The writer only chooses some stories, which are those with female characters.

The writer is interested in Rushdie’s female characters in *East, West*. These short stories present some representation of female characters which have different category and character. Those female characters came from different background and society, and that is the reason why they are different to each other. Those characters are: 1) Rehana, female character in “Good Advice is Rarer than Rubies”, 2) Thief’s widow in “The Free Radio”, 3) Humain “The Prophet’s Hair”, 4) Mala in “The Harmony of The Sphere”. As an exploration of human action and reaction, the interesting thing about the female characters are that they seem to be created by Salman Rushdie as a new image of how (Indian) women are supposed to be in real life. Those female characters apparently challenge the traditional image of women that we believe all these time. As generally known, women in patriarchal society like India tend to be powerless and bounded by the system, but the characteristic (the way they act, think and face the problem) of those female characters seem to be new type of women in patriarchal society. The writer believes that Rushdie tries to create his own image about women, because the characterization of Rushdie’s female characters are unique and significant, considering the fact that he is an Indian author who has spent many years living in both western and eastern country, such England and Pakistan. Furthermore, the stories in *East, West* were written during his exile, when he himself was supposed to be worried about his own safety. Therefore, I propose this

research with the title “Salman Rushdie’s Image of Women in the Collection of Short Stories *East, West*”.

## 1.2 The Identification of the Problems

In many places around the world, so many societies dichotomize human based on gender; men and women. This dichotomy sets stereotypes of gender role, which believes that men are stronger than women. It even gives more power on men’s hand. In this research, the writer focuses on the images of the female characters presented by Salman Rushdie in the collection of short stories *East, West*. In this collection of short stories, Rushdie presents some female characters (most of them are main characters) with different traits from other women in the stories, who are assumed as real women. These female characters in *East, West* are not the devilish or the easily intimidated woman, or the secondary member of society, as commonly found in the novels by male authors who hold on to patriarchal belief. Rushdie’s female characters appear to be strong, independent and smart. Thus, the writer believes that they are created to challenge the common image of women, particularly Indian women.

## 1.3 The Scope of the Research

*East West* is a collection of short stories which consists of three parts, “East”, “West” and “East-West”. Each section consists of three short stories. Part “East” takes the setting around Indian main land; part “West” takes the setting in European or western country and part “East-West” has the combination of both. The major



limitation in this research is the female characters; this research discusses only the images of women as represented by the female characters, even though some of them are not the main characters but they surely have a point to discuss.

Female characters that will be discussed are: 1) Rehana, female character in “Good Advice is Rarer than Rubies”, 2) Thief’s widow from “The Free Radio”, 3) Huma from “The Prophet’s Hair”, and 4) Mala in “The Harmony of The Sphere”. Therefore, in this research the writer focuses only on those female characters, especially their traits in facing and solving their problems.

#### 1.4 Research Questions

The focus of this research is to analyze the image of female characters that is created by Salman Rushdie in his collection of short story *East, West*. Therefore, in this research the writer proposes two research questions, which will be the writer’s limitation of this research.

1. How are women portrayed in the four chosen short stories?
2. Through these female characters, does Salman Rushdie reinforce patriarchal ideology or undermine it ?

#### 1.5 The Objective of the Research

The aim of this research is to examine and explain the images of women in Salman Rushdie’s short story collection, *East, West*. In addition, it reveals how Rushdie’s female characters challenge the image of women in patriarchal system. The

writer hopes this research will be useful for the other researchers and will enrich the literary research, particularly, about the image of women.

### 1.6 The Review of Related Studies

Many researchers have read and analyzed Rushdie's works. Among them is Jessica Brown, who has written an undergraduate thesis, entitled *East/West: Salman Rushdie and Hybridity* (2011). In the thesis Brown proves that Rushdie's works, such as *Midnight's Children*, *Shame*, and *The Satanic Verses* show his strong belief in mixing cultures and identity, rather than limiting identification to a singular place or idea by using Hybridity theory. Additionally, her thesis totally argues that Rushdie's novels depict how cultural change and translation may be difficult or painful, and that the process is a beneficial one for all. Based on her analysis, she believes that Rushdie's collected works is completely dedicated to the idea that cultural blend will create a better and peaceful world in the future. The research that was conducted by Brown shows the reader the indication of cultural blending and mixture in Rushdie's works. This research supports the writer's opinion above about the cultural blending and mixture during his exile that affects *East West*. In conclusion this research has contribution to strengthen the idea of the writer in doing this analysis.

The second research is *Woman in Salman Rushdie's Shame, East, West, and The Moor's Last Sigh* (2001) written by Deepaly Prasad for her dissertation. In her analysis, she examines the status of women of Indo-Pakistani origin and their representation in literary fiction with main emphasis on the writings of Salman

Rushdie. In this case she has addressed the issue of the stereotypical image of the eastern women, her traditional role in society, religious fundamentalism and the post-colonial legacy and tried to relate them to the depiction of women in Rushdie's works. Prasad's research helps the writer to understand information about female characters in *East West*. She describes some female characters, but in this case she just explains those female characters very briefly. So then, based on this, the writer explains more and deeply about those female characters, particularly how their characteristics challenge the patriarchal binary images of man and woman.

The last related studies, the writer found an analysis by Dina Silvia Yoza in her undergraduate thesis *The Woman Representation in Facing The Unfair 19<sup>th</sup> Century Matrimonial Law in Thomas Hardy's Jude The Obscure* (2008) analyzes woman roles in facing unfair marriage system that influenced by patriarchal culture which dominated in 19<sup>th</sup> century, and represented by male author in literary work. She intended to see the feminist perspective and feminist values inside on the novel. In her research, Dina found that representation of main female character in *Jude the Obscure* is smart, modern minded, and pro-feminism, which is she has her own perspective and attitude against the marriage system which is influenced by patriarchal system. Dina's research that writer read is useful to enrich writer's knowledge and understanding about the representation of women. However, this research shows how we have to do the research about feminism, especially representation of women. At last this research becomes the foundation of this research.



Finally the writer found that from the previous studies, those studies related to his research but it has different object, perspective and theory as well. In this case, the writer is going to discuss about image of women, which presented in some ways that break the order, rule and the common portrayal in facing their problem, tradition and culture to fulfill their necessity of life by using feminist approach. In this chance writer only focus on female characters in this work that investigates and examines those female characters action in the story.

### 1.7 Theoretical Framework

The writer believes that inequality of gender in society is the ancient problem among human race. Most of women were treated unfair and unequal. Women were considered as inferior creatures; men are creatures who are given the power by the society. Women stereotype is always represented by bad images. Such images are the discourse of gender role created by patriarchal society.

Some movements which concern about this issue appeared; the feminist activists and participants show up to fight for and defend women's side to pursue equality with men. The 'women's movement' in 1960s was not the beginning of feminism, but it is more like renewal thought of old tradition about the issue of women's inequality in society.

Somehow, literature became an important part of feminism and became one of the media for this movement, especially women's movement to pursue their aims.

Roberts confirm it in book *Writing about Literature* (9<sup>th</sup> edition):

As an adjunct of the feminist movement, the feminist critique of literature seeks to raise consciousness about the importance and unique nature of women in literature. Specifically, the feminist view attempt (1) to show that writers of traditional literature have ignored women and have also transmitted misguided and prejudice on them, (2) to stimulate creation of critical milieu that reflects a balance view of the nature and the value of women. (168)

In this research, writer analyzes *East-West* by Rushdie by using feminist literary criticism. Feminist literary criticism is a kind of feminist movement, which analyzes literary works that deals with a woman as a subject. Feminist literary critics try to explain how power imbalances due to gender in a given culture are reflected in and challenged by literary texts (Guerin, 197). Therefore, feminist literary criticism is used to scrutinize the images of woman in a literary work by male author. Josephine Donovan states that “ through the ‘image of women’ approach the critic determines how women characters are presented in literature”. (1997, 211)

Furthermore, to support and strengthen the theoretical framework of this research, the writer applies Helen Cixous’s theory about patriarchal binary thought. This theory is intended to examine how those female characters challenge the common images of women it patriarchal system and this will also be used to determine which binary opposition that is challenged by Rushdie’s female characters. Tyson explains in his book *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide* (1999) about Helene Cixous’s *Patriarchal binary thought* :

language reveal[s] what she calls *Patriarchal binary thought*, which might be defined as seeing the world in terms of polar opposite, one of which is considered superior to the other. Examples include such hierarchical binary oppositions as head/heart, father/mother, culture/nature, intelligible/palpable (that which can be understood by the mind versus that which can be felt by the body), sun/moon, and activity/passivity. Opposition like these organize the way we think, and for each opposition Cixous ask, “where is [the woman]?”. That is, which side of each opposition is assumed to define some aspect of the female? Clearly, according to patriarchal thinking, the woman occupies the right side of each of these oppositions, the side that patriarchy considers inferior. (100)

Actually, those binaries explain about the opposition between men and women in many society based on the spectacles of patriarchy. Therefore, based on these binary oppositions we are going to examine Rushdie’s female characters by using those binary oppositions. Those binaries are going to be determiner whether Rushdie’s female characters set new images of women or the way around.

Furthermore, it is explained in the website of *Plannedparenthood.org*, that the term of stereotype is a general judgment regarding a person or group and also accepted by the society. The judgment that is made can cause unfair and unequal treatment just because of a person’s gender, and it used to be called sexism. By using this theory, the writer wants to examine the images of (Indian) women that Rushdie

reconstruct through his female characters in *East, West*, which tries to challenge the traditional gender role that we have long believed.

### 1.8 The Method of Literary Research

This research is a qualitative research. Bodgan and Knoppbiken state that: “Qualitative is descriptive. The data collected is in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. The written results of the research contain quotation from the data to illustrate and substantiate the presentation” (28). The first step in this research is collecting data. The writer applies a library research method to gather two kinds of data: primary data and secondary data. Collection of short story *East West* by Salman Rushdie is the source of the primary data and the secondary data are from other reading materials like books, internet web page which is concerning feminist approach, and any related sources. The second step is analyzing the data. In analyzing the data, first of all, the writer read the story intensively so the writer can understand the whole story. The classification of data comes next, which functions to eliminate the irrelevant stories. It means that stories without female characters are not chosen as the source of primary data. Next, writer starts noting the important description and dialogues which indicates the building of the image of the female characters. After that writer tries to elaborate the characters of women that are built by Rushdie through the female characters in the chosen stories, and relate them to Cixous’s explanation about the binary images of men and women. The last step is presenting



the result of analysis. Since this research is a qualitative research, then the result of analysis is presented descriptively.

