
WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN FATIMA MERNISSI'S *DREAM OF TRESPASS: TALES OF A HAREM GIRLHOOD*

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Abstract

This paper points to women's view that Fatima Mernissi explained through conversation with women. Mernissi describes that she told about the activities of women. Women cannot do everything that men do, the women just stayed in harem and they forbidden to go out looking for the world. Only men can do anything then women saved in harem. Harem is the place that contains women in Arab, no men inside especially they are husbands that will only see their wives and their children then they cannot stay with them. Mernissi felt that it is injustice. She thought that it is not equal between men and women, it should be no differences both of them. The men always do activities in outside meanwhile the women do not. She delivered the hadith in the story about the equality. In describing the story, the writers used structural approach by Tyson (2006) to show the description the story through the narration. The writers collected data to analyze in Mernissi's work. Thus the researcher found some data in her books that refer to women right. The book's *Dream of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood* showed about the life of women in harem and Mernissi tried to catch the problems which happened to women. This research made the writers knew about the crisis happened in a long time ago where there is no equality between men and women. So, the writer used this book to analyze data about women's right and then she was the first Muslim woman who in that era that wants to get women's right in Arab.

Key words: Harem, women, women's right, Arab, Muslim.

INTRODUCTION

Fatima Mernissi was born on September 27, 1940, Fez, Morocco. She is a sociologist and feminist writer from Morocco. She lives in a place called a harem. According to KBBI, harem is a separate part of the house specifically for women in Arab countries. At that time, Mernissi lived in a time of war between the kingdoms of Spain and France. So, the position of women was lower than men. The women are gathered in the harem. Mernissi lives with his grandmother named Lalla Yasmina. Yasmina gave him education about the history of Islam, including the story of the Prophet Muhammad and the conditions of women before Islam.

Since childhood, Mernissi has been involved in her thought about the difference of boys and girls. This difference raises the question that boys are better special than girls. This made Mernissi want to find out more about the oppression made by the west against women especially in the book entitled *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood*

Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood (1994) is one of her memoirs that exposes the multiply of experiences faced by women living in harem and talks about the confusion Mernissi's experiences as a young girl in harem against the backdrop of Moroccan Nationalism, Westernization, and the nascent women's rights movements. Bunch and Samantha (2000: 1), the term "women's human rights" and the set of practices that accompanies its use are the continuously evolving product of an international movement to improve the status of women. She continually seeks the answer deeply about the status of women. As a woman, she feels that there is no right in harem. The special people can do everything they want while the ordinary people cannot do. Thus harem is the place that the walls around block the view directly to the street. The people in harem cannot see the view freely because they are like prisoned in this place. She wants the truth that happens in the world. Bunch and Samantha (2000: 3) states "... human rights apply to everyone equally, for everyone is equal in simply being human." Mernissi feels that we are same. There are no differences between us then since she was young, she always asked to herself about justice to the women because there are no boys inside harem and they freely play outside with their family.

At that time, his grandmother always taught Mernissi good things to read the Qur'an every day. But, on the other hand Mernissi was very confused by the statement that a woman

cannot lead a country. York (2014: 44) stated that it is virtually impossible or very difficult for both men and women to vote, such as the absence of free and fair elections, violations of freedom of expression, or lack of security, which tends to affect women disproportionately. The situation forces her to choose silent in looking the world happens. Not only the voting cannot be done by women, but also the women in harem cannot see the world freely. The freedom is an imagination for Mernissi. She always seeks the truth with asking questions to the people in harem. After she has grown up, she wrote a book entitled *The Forgotten Queen of Islam* discusses the Hadith that the woman can be a leader. According to Mernissi (1999: 5), such an event shows this Hadith has deeply penetrated Muslims. So, when the women become leaders, they become lively debated. Like the case of Benazir Butho who was then Prime Minister in Pakistan. Though al-Qur'an has revealed clearly the example of Queen Bilqis as the leader.

Discussion

Fatima Mernissi became a leading feminist writer in the world because of her work that shook the world about feminism. Mernissi is very well known by feminists, because she is the first Muslim woman in the Middle East who succeeded in freedom of herself and women from the issue of cultural loyalty and betrayal. Mernissi's childhood was very influential and made a mark in the struggle for her defense of women. She lived and grew up in a harem with her mother, grandmother, aunts and sisters. A wall room that is guarded by a doorman makes the women do not come out. The harem is also cared and served well by women.

Mernissi thought that why do always men lead something? Annan (2019: 2) states "all human rights issues affect women. However, women also suffer specific denial of their human rights because of their gender." Mernissi refused to be the difference between men and women, her mother also refused that. Gender is not the reason about leadership. She always thinks about different gender that makes her pressure in this situation and his mother rejected the superiority of men and regarded it as unfavorable and contrary to Islam. According to Mernissi (1994: 22-23), explained in her book that his mother said God created men and women as equals. The patriarchal system in Arab society is deeply rooted. Yet this is contrary to the attitude of the Prophet towards women who are so wise and tolerant.

In this connection, Mernissi said that women Muslim could enter the modern world with pride, because the struggle for glory, democracy and human rights to be able to play a full role in the political and social fields, was not sourced from values imported from the west, however it is a true part of Muslim tradition. "The concept of women's human rights has opened the way for women around the world..." (Bunch and Samantha, 2000: 4). Then the women right cannot depend on gender because women can do the works of men. After reading the works of Ulama such as Ibn Hisham, Ibn Hajar, Ibn Sa'addan al-Tabari and other Ulama, have provided evidence to feel proud of my Islamic past and feel justified in appreciating the best results of modern civilization such as giving rights and full civil rights to women (Mernissi, 1991: 219-220).

Among discussion about women rights, the writers choose the book *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood* (1994) especially in chapter 7 "In Harem Within" by Fatima Mernissi as the object. The book shows about her childhood lived in harem. She always thought about her life in there because there is something bad that happens in her life like the difference of gender quality. The writers use the method of structuralism because this research relates about narrative sentence. As Tyson (2006: 220) said that structuralist approaches to literature focuses on the narrative dimension of literary texts because structuralist criticism deals mainly with narrative. The explanation of women rights analyzes through narrations in the texts, the structural approach describes the stories through narration. The writers divide into two research question such as the kind of women rights and the final thought of women rights.

1) Women Rights

The writers found three points to be analyzed about women rights.

a. Injustice

The important adults rode in cars, while the children, divorced aunts, and other relatives were put into two big trucks rented for the occasion. (Mernissi, 1994: 58)

When she would go picnic with her family, she found the special family rode the cars while she rode the truck. There are the differences between her and other when the men picked their family up in the harem to go to picnic. The men can do everything he wants and he can go free everywhere while the women cannot.

"There's no record of it in the Hadith," she said, "It might even be counted as a sin on Judgment Day." (Mernissi, 1994: 59)

The events that she saw every day in harem become her to ask the question in her mind about gender and social-class. The treatment that she gave from other feels injustice. She hopes that the judgement is the way to count the sin they treat to us.

b. Effort

Of course, if you rushed like an arrow up to the terrace, you could see that the sky was larger than the house, larger than everything, but from the courtyard, nature seemed irrelevant. (Mernissi, 1994: 57)

Mernissi told to the readers that the situation she lives is like cage with the walls around harem. She cannot see the world freely even she wants to see the street describes with an arrow up to the terrace. It shows that she does not live freely like other can see the world outside.

The terrace exit route was seldom watched, for the simple reason that getting from it to the street was a difficult undertaking. You needed to be quite good at three skills: climbing, jumping, and agile landing. (Mernissi, 1994: 60)

The effort in looking outside has to step at three skills: climbing, jumping, and agile landing. The women who are bored in the situation in harem want to see directly the street with climbing because harem faced straight in street when the gate opened, but the effort always fails since the landing is not good to be done. Some of women got bleeding in knees when they landed.

The terrace route had a clandestine, covert dimension to it, which was repulsive to those who were fighting for the principle of a woman's right to free movement. (Mernissi, 1994: 60)

The point to want go out is the women want a freedom where the men have. The men can freely live outside since the women cannot. Mernissi asks about the justification to women. Where is justice? She always thinks about the women in society that the women are lower than the men. Finally, she is the first woman Muslim who declares women rights.

c. Solution

No other men could enter it without the owner's permission, and when they did, they had to obey his rules. A harem was about private space and the rules regulating it. (Mernissi, 1994: 61)

Like onions peel one by one as Yasmina said, Mernissi got the pieces of truth about the world to women. Yasmina said that harem was about the private space. She got the conclusion that harem connects with her faith to the men.

Wherever there are human beings, there is a *qa'ida*, or invisible rule. If you stick to the *qa'ida*, nothing bad can happen to you. (Mernissi, 1994: 62)

Yasmina said that *qa'ida* is invisible rule. The writers realize that it is *kaidah*. If you stick to the *qa'ida*, nothing bad can happen to you. Yasmina describes with the veil which are worn by the women. When the women wear the veil, the men cannot see their *awrah*. It teaches about the rule in Islam that the women have to wear the veil. Someone who does not wear the veil may happen something with her when she goes outside in harem.

2) Final Thought

There are two discussions to show the answer about Mernissi's questions in the story. The answer are:

"The ultimate goal of a woman's life is happiness. So don't spend your time looking for walls to bang your head on." (Mernissi, 1994: 64)

Mernissi always asks about freedom. The people who are outside can feel the freedom. Then, Yasmina said that you don't spend your time looking for walls to bang your head on. She reminds Mernissi to not think about walls, but she has to see the future and she will reach happiness.

"Of course you will be happy!" she would exclaim. "You will be a modern, educated lady. You will realize the nationalists' dream. You will learn foreign languages, have a passport, devour books, and speak like a religious authority. (Mernissi, 1994: 64)

Her final answer came from Yasmina. She got the answer about her question that You will learn foreign languages, have a passport, devour books, and speak like a religious authority. The happiness and freedom will be reached if Mernissi can show his power to the world. The power are languages, books, and she have to speak up about women right. Then, the answer in her thought answered through Yasmina.

Conclusion

Fatima Mernissi is the first woman Muslim who declares women rights. She describes her childhood about women rights in harem and wrote the story in book *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood*. The book shows about her experience that she always asks about women. She realizes that the world is injustice for women because the women cannot get the freedom like the men got. She lives in harem with the walls around and she cannot freely see the world directly. In her mind, she always asks about the situation got to her. She tries to seek the answer with asking the questions to the people who lives in harem. She wants to show to the world that the existence of women has to get the recognition. The world has to know that the presence of women can be equal with men. The men have to give a chance to the women about their views to the women. The women and the men are equal, there are no differences in human rights and no gender equalities. The women can show their ability and they deserve to declare their voices in the world.

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