THE IDEAS OF FEMINISM REFLECTED IN ESTHER’S STRUGGLE IN LIBERATING HER NATION SEEN IN THE BOOK OF ESTHER

AN UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

Presented as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the degree for Sarjana Sastra
In English Letters

By

STELLA NOVIANI
Student Number: 134214122

ENGLISH LETTERS STUDY PROGRAMME
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LETTERS
FACULTY OF LETTERS
SANATA DHARMA UNIVERSITY
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Stella Noviani
“DON’T FEEL SORRY FOR YOURSELF. ONLY ASSHOLES DO THAT.”

-HARUKI MURAKAMI, NORWEGIAN WOOD
I DEDICATED MY UNDERGRADUATE THESIS:

TO MY NANA IN HEAVEN
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ABSTRACT

NOVIANI, STELLA. The Ideas of Feminism Reflected in Esther’s Struggle in Liberating Her Nation Seen in The Book of Esther. Yogyakarta; Department of English Letters, Faculty of Letters, Sanata Dharma University, 2018.

Due to its popularity, studying bible often links with literature, since it influences the way of writers and poets expressed their ideas. That bible and literary texts are product of human kind, reading bible as literature also provides a picture of human’s relation. It is a medium to give a basic information about how men gain authority over women. That Esther as one of the significant figure in bible, that could dismantle the practices of patriarchal cultures and proves her power as women to against it. Her action is considered reflects the feminist idea though feminism had not yet appeared.

There are three objectives for analyzing this thesis. First is to find out the character and characterization of Esther in the text. The second objective is to reveal the practice of patriarchal cultures in two different societies which are Jewish and Persian. Then the last objective is to observe Esther’s struggle that reflects feminist ideas.

The object of the study is taken from one of Old Testament’s book that entitled The Book of Esther. This book is divided into ten chapters. To show Esther’s struggle to save her nation, the writer uses feminist approach. Then the method uses in this study is a library-research method by taking the narrative text as the primary source and books related to theory, approach, related studies, and criticism, and internet as secondary sources. After reading the text, the writer focuses on Esther as the major female character in the text. Then, the writer formulates the problems with secondary sources. In the end, the last step is to apply the primary source and secondary source to answer the problem formulation.

From the analysis, the thesis reveals: Esther in the text is a dynamic character. Under Mordecai’s parental guidance, Esther is described as an obedient and passive girl. Yet after entering the Persian palace and becoming a queen, she develops herself to be a more independent woman in acting toward the situation. It is seen from her act of defeating the villain, Haman, which takes her bravery, strength, intelligence, balance, and her eloquent speech. Moreover, the patriarchal practices in Jewish and Persian society depicts in four points, those are, the unequal chance to have voice and opportunity, women’s body exploitation, discrimination toward women, and degrading women’s capability. In the end, to refuse those treatments, Esther proves that as a woman, she achieves power by becoming a leader of her nation.
ABSTRAK

NOVIANI, STELLA. The Ideas of Feminism Reflected in Esther’s Struggle in Liberating Her Nation Seen in The Book of Esther. Yogyakarta; Program Studi Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Sastra, Universitas Sanata Dharma, 2018.


Sumber utama dalam penelitian ini diambil dari salah satu perikop alkitab Perjanjian Lama yang berjudul Ester; dengan sepuluh bagian ayat didalamnya. Untuk meneliti upaya Ester membebaskan bangsanya, peneliti menggunakan pendekatan feminisme. Metode penelitian pustaka dilakukan dengan dukungan teori, pendekatan, kajian, dan kritik sebagai sumber sekunder. Setelah membaca teks secara seksama, penulis akan memfokuskan penelitian pada Ester dan memformulasikan tiga rumusan masalah. Pada akhirnya, penggabungan sumber primer dan sekunder akan dilakukan dalam menjawab rumusan masalah.

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

Bible is the most influential, well-known and well-loved book in the world. That is the appropriate thing to say for a book that is written well over 2000 years ago (https://www.ptl.org/alive/whyscripture.php). Since bible’s style, characters, images, themes, and languages have influenced Western writers for thousands of years, authors and poets such as John Milton, Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, Robert Frost and Emily Dickinson aspire their literature with allusion and metaphor taken from bible (https://lifehopeandtruth.com/bible/holy-bible/what-is-the-bible/the-bible-as-literature/). That bible inspires poets and writers with some thoughts and human expression inside of it, therefore bible is able to be studied in the same way as literature does.

A heady perception that bible as a sacred text and art form needs an extent study that popularly associates with studying it as literature. Basically, literature does tell good stories, has beautiful use of language, depth in meaning, evokes reaction, and the insight condition of human like what bible does (https://interestingliterature.com/2013/11/06/guest-blog-ten-reasons-why-the-bible-is-literature/). Like in bible, stories of inside it, do communicate what the authors want to say according to the era and culture they want to express. Bible also provides characters that build up the events vividly. Another thing, some
other thoughts are not applicable in that form, therefore love songs, hymns, expression of pain and sorrow expressed in poetry.

Regarded as one of the most significant literatures in the world, biblical literature also is a compact medium to express the normative gender roles. It is often argued that bible provides a particular justification on relationship between men and women. Thus, biblical literature becomes a powerful tool to see the process of men’s gaining authority in almost all aspects in society and how most women still struggle to provide positive identity by ‘self-actualizing’ themselves as an act to not depend on men (Beal, 2002:42).

In relation to the presence of women in the bible, the standpoint to view women is often too complex to discern. Though some women are viewed positively, a direct effect of patriarchal culture from bible that writes women as a second-class citizen, makes women’s bad image still dominates. Therefore, women’s contribution in bible is not given fully acknowledgement.

From the very first chapter of Old Testament, women are treated like men; since women are created as the image of God just as men are (Genesis 1: 27), there is still yet distinction between both, "Male and female He created them" (Genesis 1: 27). From the creation, certain roles are assigned. It is Eve who gives birth. It is Eve who nurses a child. Because of physical differences, like the women’s monthly cycle and physical form, the differences in responsibility were inevitable. But the misconception of women’s origin builds a subjective image towards women’s position; woman is only a part of men’s ribs. This subjective thought is supported by Genesis 2: 21-22 which exposes women’s limitation.
The story about how God uses Adam’s rib to form Eve is to show that actually they are the same created being. The female is not formed separately, she is formed to be an initial man as the “suitable helper” for men. However, the emergence of a perception about women as a “helper”, significantly changes the image of women since it is the key to describe women’s role in the early of Old Testament. Though the term “helper” is considered less significant, this is merely used to describe the character of God which means women have capability and strength to help.

There are some women who succeed to help themselves and understand their role and mission. They as women contribute a change toward the society’s issue by picking up their own life and being productive. Since they understand their position as women that have visions, they undertake a variety of roles in their society. In religious leadership, both Miriam and Deborah appear as leaders; Miriam is a leader of Israel’s women in worshipping and Deborah as a leader to free her people from Barak’s oppression. Two heroic saviors are Judith and Esther who deliver Jews from annihilation. Three maids who functions as mother for patriarch’s children are Hagar, Bilhah, and Zilpah. Finally, women are not seen as a being that is inferior to men.

Esther’s life and ministry are so prominent and such a great account that she become one of two women in old testament who has a book in bible after her name. Esther is a young brave girl who is chosen for saving her nation. *The Book of Esther* tells a story about a Jewish young orphan girl who becomes a queen. This book also provides the picture of Jews people living under Persian’s rule.
Although the name of God is never mentioned in the text, the story of Esther is included in the scripture because of its relevance to mankind and providence of God.

In this narrative, Esther serves as a positive model who appears to behave according to the norms for women yet including taking stand for what is right and just. As a stranger in a world and system prescribed by masculine ideas, women only attain position by gaining favor of others whereby to make a difference. Women indeed play their game by not always following men’s rules like what Esther does. She uses the power that is available for her to manipulate the king through the feminine wiles. With that, Esther defeats the villain and saves her nation from extinction. She bravely leaves her uncle’s parental guidance and willingly risked her life and utilized her intellect, wisdom, yet to some degree of her beauty to maintain her power that was given to her. Through her struggle, her time had not been considered as feminism, yet she bears the idea of feminism.
B. Problem Formulation

As an effort to see Esther’s description as a woman and its contribution towards her struggle in liberating her nation, the writer formulates three questions.

1. How is Esther’s characteristics, role and position as a Jewish woman described in *The Book of Esther*?

2. What are the patriarchal practices experienced by Esther in Persian and Jewish societies?

3. How does Esther’s struggle in liberating her nation reflect the ideas of feminism?

C. Objective of Study

The aims of this research are to understand how Esther’s role and position, character, as a woman and it is described and how her struggle as Jewish woman in liberating her nation in patriarchal nations reflecting the ideas of feminism.

D. Definition of Terms

The aim of this section is to give clear information about the terms that will be used in this research.

1. Feminism

A movement is organized by women to attain equal rights in social and political field from men, in order to increase power to all women that also includes their participation in society as an act of emancipation (Lerner, 1985:236-237).
2. **Role and Position**

In feminism, role and position are words associated with the status of women in society. Role is referred to the expected behaviour that is given women to perform an act according to their position. Then, position here is concerned with the status of women in society according to their performance as a part of society (http://www.differencebetween.info/difference-between-role-position-and-designation).
CHAPTER II
THEORETICAL REVIEW

A. Review of Related Studies

In *The Book of Esther*, the struggle of Esther as an initiator to release her nation from genocide is the key of her achievement as a woman. She faces some obstacles in releasing her nation due to her position as a captive woman. However, she manages herself to adapt with the oppressor’s and leave Mordecai’s parental control by becoming a queen to save her nation.

In the era of Esther, the emerges of patriarchal institution is portrayed within the system of two nations. The Jews and the Persian, where men are dominated in all aspects of life. Also, the struggle of Esther who tries to subvert the patriarchal system is actually a way to promote women’s power in society.

Regarding the condition of woman in patriarchal society, Juliet in Shakespeare’s play Romeo and Juliet is one of examples that participates to against patriarchal’s rules. This is what Elisabeth Marsella studied, with the title “Ideas of Feminism Reflected in Juliet’s Struggle in Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet”. It reveals the struggle of the main character, Juliet. She is aware to a discrimination toward women around her, and she reacts to it by determining her own destiny. In Shakespeare’s plays, some of the female characters are prominent; having some will, strong will, and productive mind (Boulton in Marsella, 2006:2). In this study, the researcher chooses Juliet as a character that represents those characteristics. Choosing Juliet as the character to be studied, this
study reveals that Juliet is different from the other female characters that the play presents.

However, Juliet is not like any other women in the play. She prefers to fight against men’s control. By understanding the true problem of the woman that is reject the flights from reality, Juliet shows the society that women should not reject the flight but they must accept it to be liberated from their otherness (Marsella, 2006:56).

Juliet is persistent about her principle not to marry a person from her father’s choice. She bravely voices her opinion to refuse her father’s plan for marrying her to Capulet. Instead of blaming the condition, she tries so hard to find a way to solve the problem. She tricks the situation and decides to form a strategy to get out of the pressure of marrying someone she does not like. She decides to drink poisonous liquid. Thus, Juliet’s characteristics are different to other women characters whom are obedient, passive, loyal, and quiet women (Marsella, 2006:27-31).

The researcher agrees that women are still being treated unfairly to men. It is proven, men always have been privileged in almost all aspects of human life for centuries. Society sees men as a suitable leader that is able to head a family and decide all the stuffs inside the house, include a personal problem such as marriage. As Juliet sees her father as man that treats her like an object that can be sold to a man that she never loved, she later wants to reject the idea that woman is an object. She shows a woman must prove that she is capable of doing as men do. That is why she braves to fight her love for Romeo. Thus, the researcher sees that Juliet as an example of woman who is aware of her position as an agent change as what Esther does.
The second study is entitled “Ideas of Feminism Revealed in Lena Lingard’s and Antonia’s characters as seen in Willa Charter’s My Antonia” written by Maria Goreti Tri Kurniawati (1998). This study focuses on two female characters in Willa Charter’s novel that represents the symbol of feminist movement. Often, male traits of behavior are built greater than female because of the traditional gender roles. Meanwhile, through the novel, the two female characters break the gender roles. Both of them, who are Antonia and Lena Lingard are depicted as different figures. They refuse to let anyone make them do what they do not want to. They also survive through hardship in New World, America, as immigrants who work for themselves. Successfully, both of them develop personality that they can feel proud of and confident in as independent women.

In this study, the researcher wants to reveal the ideas of feminism that are reflected in Esther’s struggle in releasing her nation. Living under Persian patriarchal system and her uncle’s control definitely restrict her movement as a woman. But Esther is brave to break the rules, to become more assertive, initiative, and canny in encountering with the situation that threatens her nation. This study does not only discuss about gender inequality yet also promotes women’s capability in developing themselves as agent of social change.

Those studies provide the condition of women and patriarchal societies where they settle. Meanwhile to understand more about Esther’s characteristic as a Jewish woman, the researcher provides an analytical study about Esther’s
background that appropriate for completing the analysis. This study will provide the writer’s examination about her names and her nicknames.

According to Davidocvich in his analytical book, *Esther, Queen of the Jews: The status and Position of Esther in the Old Testament*, the narrator in *The Book of Esther* mentioned Esther for 55 times while she is called as Hadassah only for once. The issue of Esther’s twofold name has the most possible elaboration that Hadassah is her Jewish name yet Esther is a given name from Persian as she officially entered the palace. Since the setting is in Persian Empire, it is very common for women have two names: the origin name and the official name (Davidovich, 2013:40).

Esther also mentioned as a child that grew up in a low social status as a child “without father and mother”. Since the status of foreigner, the orphan, and the widow are in very low social status and also economic status, they need certain legislative protection. By welcoming Esther into his house, Mordecai provides Esther with legal rights over her. His act of helping Esther is based on some rules and instructions that provided in Numbers 12:47-49, 22:20-23, Deuteronomy 14:28-29, 17:9-14, 24:17-22, and also Jeremiah 7, Isaiah 1:23, and Ruth 2 (Davidovich, 2013:41).

This study is to make the setting where Esther is grown up as a woman completes the analysis. Also, these information helps broaden the researcher perspective on Esther become the base of learning Esther traits.
B. Review of Related Theories

1. Theory of Character and Characterization

The structure of a story are characters. They often interlock with the other elements of a story such as plot, setting and other important background that support the characters’ dynamics. Their significant function is seen through the progress on characters’ development in passing the events in a story (Day, 1995:19). From the characters’ patterns, it instantly creates an impression toward the content of a whole story.

In a biblical narrative text, we have limited direct information about the characters. The inward feelings and thoughts or the outward appearance are not explicitly presented like modern type of narrative literature usually does (Day, 1995:22). Yet, to examine the characters in a biblical text it needs the combination of both of the techniques.

providing the information about the character’s interaction and relation to other characters by contrasting their traits (Day, 1995:23).

Primary techniques are inward speech, description, direct speech, and actions:

a. Inward Speech

What the characters think about themselves and their thoughts will determine the character’s personality. The internal expression of the characters includes the thoughts of the characters and their inner monologue, also what they express in their prayers, dreams, and visions (Day, 1995:24).

b. Description

The description towards characters is usually described by the other character or the narrator of the story. The information which is given in description is including mental states, character traits, and outward appearances (Day, 1995:24).

c. Direct Speech

The speech inside of the story is having an intention, mainly in narratives, the characters’ words characterize them and show what kind of personality they have. Yet the manner on how it said is also consider as personality (Day, 1995:24).

d. Actions

The characters’ actions inside of the story form its personality. The outer behaviour of characters can be observed by seeing at the characters’ inner nature and motives. Hence, the repetition of the gestures that the characters use, the way of character absorbs something, the way they react towards events, are also illuminating their characteristics (Day, 1995:24).
Secondary techniques are relationship with other characters, comparison with other characters, and contrast with expectation:

e. Relationship with Other Characters

The way of characters behaves and involve themselves in interacting with another individual or group of people is a way to see the characters’ relationship with others (Day, 1995:25).

f. Comparison with Other Characters

The comparison between two characters in a narrative is hoped to help the particular traits of both through their interaction. It also can help to show the similarity and the difference of both. Even, characters could be compared to another in different biblical narrative (Day, 1995:25).

g. Contrast with Expectation

Every character has its own nature that forces them to behave in certain kind of situation. They often expected to be kind of person that behaves according to expected norm that a narrator or other character already set. Yet it turns out the characters simply behave differently from their expectation (Day, 1995:25).

2. Theory of Patriarchy

The concept of patriarchy according to Jane Pilcher and Imelda Whelhan in Cultural Theory: The Key Concept, is ‘the father’s rule’. It is used by feminists to describe the way of social system that male practices oppression and domination over women. However, patriarchy has been the most fundamental element to identify the bases of female’s subordination (2004:93).
A word patriarchy is a word from ancient Greek, where a society is held by elder males which literally means the rule of father or the ‘patriarch’, and it is used to describe a type of family that is based on male-domination—the large patriarch household which included women, junior men, children, slave and domestic servants are all ruled under this male domination (Bhasin, 2006:3). Thus, the familial model of a household shows that authority is dependent on father or the husband who frames the political of authority that involves distribution of power in a family.

The term of patriarchy is used as an ideology to describe the male domination, to give men power and authority to control over women and girls. Because of that, men hold power in all important institutions of society, and women are deprived of access to such power (Lerner, 1986:238). Thus, the subordination of women became the central structure of interpersonal domination since the traditionalists’ understanding spread view that sexual asymmetry causes female subordination in biological factors affecting male. Men’s greater physical strength, ability, and experience are valued as a natural feature to defend and protect the more vulnerable creature that is women (Lerner, 1986:17).

The subordination of women has a distinct advantage to picture the evil plan of the dominant; it practices the collusion of him and the subordinate. The possibility of accepting the subordinate position voluntarily is merely for status in exchanging protection and privilege, a condition that women have been constructed (Lerner, 234-235). No matter what class women belong to, the forms
of subordination are varied, such, discrimination, control, and exploitation (Sultana, 2011:7).

The patriarchal domination is made men to degrade women and make them as a member of second sex class group. As a result, women in society suffer discrimination on the basis of sex. The sex discrimination is unjust because it removes women as individuals who have wishes, interests, abilities, or merits. Since it deprives the women’s right, women do not have the same freedom and opportunity as men do. Men are judged based on their actual ability and interests while women are assumed to be limited in certain interests and abilities because of their sex (Jaggar, 1983:176). Therefore, women’s disadvantage position is related to the participation of women’s own process of subordination because they have doctrinized to internalize the idea of their own inferiority and that is the major cause of keeping them subordinate (Lerner, 1986:218).

That female subordination is blocking the entrance and success of women in so-called the public world (Tong, 2009:2), women’s inferior position in society is naturally being neglectful in certain kind access to resource and even to decide something. The society insists men to control over women’s sexual and women’s self-identity, self-respects, and self-esteem (Tong, 2009:49) to reduce their function as a part of a society. Women voluntarily accept men’s control over them as a property to exchange status of protection and privilege (Lerner, 1986:234-235) as practicing the norms of patriarchy. Thus, male control in public and private worlds maintain the patriarchy and keep women away from the power.
Subordination of women is provided by men to create a model of women’s sexual exploitation toward enslavement. The practice of men using women as servants and sex object becomes the standard for the class dominance over women in all periods. Women in subordinate classes are expected to serve men of the upper classes sexually, whether they consented or not (Lerner, 1986:88-89). Besides, the captive women or women who is positioned as concubine is wished to gain opportunity to elevate their mobility or as an added form of men’s dominance and exploitation, the system is not significant yet it does define their concept of freedom and unfreedom (Lerner, 1986:95).

In patriarchal society, the biological attributes of male and female are used as a basis to construct the set of gender identities which are feminine and masculine that related to the way of each gender provides behaviours to empower men and disempower women. It seems that in patriarchal society, the standard of normality that each gender performs in their identity and behaviour usually is culturally linked to their biological sex (Tong, 2005:51).

Regarding to the existence of patriarchy and its origin, in the past, people believe that men are born to dominate and make women in inferior position. This endless hierarchy relationship has always continued and like a nature law that cannot be changed. Yet there are some people who challenged this and utter that patriarchy is a man-made therefore it can or cannot be changed (Sultana, 2011:3).

However, the biological differences between men and women are indeed existed yet the distinction between both cannot be a standard of male domination. From those theories it is concluded that patriarchy is a system that is made by man
and its process conceived a historical background (Sultana, 2011:4). Thus, to see about women’s emancipation political strategy, first we need understand the foundation and function of women and male’s asymmetrical relationship.

3. **Theory of Feminism**

Although patriarchal culture has been rooted since centuries ago, and the discrimination towards women seems never going to end, women themselves create ideology from their own belief to fight the patriarchy as an ideology. Their ideology is called feminism. Besides helping women to move forward to feminist movement, feminism also helps to give better understanding on the ‘new self’ of women, about the position of women in society.

Relying on Beauvoir’s account of woman’s existence in patriarchal society is displayed basic tension between the immanence and transcendence (1956:597). Women are culturally and socially defined as Other, as the inessential being compared to men, as mere object and immanence. In men’s vision, women’s subjectivity, autonomy, and creativity as being human are disregarded while in women’s vision they cannot disregard the things that said to them. Just because of her situation as women, she cannot do much as what society expect her not to (Young, 2005:31-32).

Hooks’ definition about feminism reveals that to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression is to stimulate the movement that owned those principles (2000: viii-ix). Hooks explains that actually feminism is not about anti-male and the actual problem is now visible, that is sexism not being anti-male. While Osborne in her book *The Pocket Essential Feminism* defines feminism is
the way of looking the world by using the women’s perspective. She wants to encourage people to see that women are the number one focus in patriarchal society. This concept turns out describing a system to promote male’s authority by oppressing women through social, political, and economic institutions (1993:1).

Feminists found that male domination are universal and social-cultural creations which serve the male-interest of maintaining supremacy and hegemony. Also, they found that actually the sexual asymetry does not carry meaning of dominance and subordination. Rather, the tasks performed by both sexes are group survival, and both sexes are worth equal status in most aspects. In such societies, sexes are considered ‘complementary’, their roles and status not different but equal (Lerner, 1997:18).

Feminism appears as a variety to broaden the ideas and perspective about women to pursue a society which provides a space more for women by gaining a transformation of the social behaviors and institutions that specifically for women (Andersen, 1984:7). This idea gradually will help to see women’s position in society. Thus, to survive in sexist society, feminists are believed by transforming social institutions will take a part in liberating social changes in behalf of women (Andersen, 1984:8).

From those explanation above, feminism seems very clear on moving rejecting patriarchal ideology. The movement states that patriarchy has been creating women’s Otherness, controlling women’s body, and making barriers to limit women’s action. However, in order to fight this strong male’s ideology,
feminism should become stronger. Here, there are three things that feminism will do to challenge the issues:

a. Pursuing Equality

Adam is made intentionally incomplete so women is made as a helper to him. Yet this most frequent misunderstand terms of “helper” in bible creates a judgement that Eve is inferior because she made just from Adam’s rib. This misleading information results bad effects from society in valuing women. Thus, it is what makes women under men’s control.

In fact, the term “helper” here deeper meaning on how Eve supposed to describe. Eve is actually created not intended to be just “helper” or a companion, rather she becomes a being that possesses the equal qualities, responsibilities, and attributes which Adam lacks of. The clarification of Eve’s role as a helper helps to revive women’s struggle for rejecting the conservative views. Therefore, feminism attempts to fight equal rights for women. If women are used to be considered as weak creatures, now they increase their awareness by exercising their rights and reforming each of woman to re-learning appropriate social roles (Andersen, 1984:323).

Equality between men and women does not mean women will compete with men, but rather women as an individual, have natural rights since they were born. Therefore, women want to reform the patriarchal tradition by gaining the concept of individual liberty and equal opportunity (Andersen, 1984:320).
b. Freeing Women from Men’s Control

Sexism is largely remnant of traditional values and practices. The continuity of prior values has been monitored as the effects of oppression. Apparently, the gender/sex system as a start of emerging women’s oppression, not only creates women’s low position in society yet it creates male’s solidarity to set the domination.

The production of gender identities is a product of coercion of separating the sex divisions. Thus, the precondition of gender system constituted the domination over feminine sexuality (Madsen, 2000:153). The term of ‘sexuality’ is actually not a neutral term, it contains a social process that directs the expression and action between men and women in creating relations in society (Andersen, 1984:358). Through gender socialization, women and men have roles not only become the social being but also sexual beings. Therefore, the class position of women become actualized through their sexual relationship. Because women always express with degree of unfreedom as the slave women whose sexual is restrained.

Sexuality is actually an evidence of men practicing their authority over women. To achieve the goal, men design strategies to control women’s sexuality. One powerful strategy includes objectification of women, treated women as object and only valued based on how others use them (Frederick & Roberts, 1977:2).

The development of sexism in patriarchal society and the social relations urged feminists to reproduce the gender roles with openness and awareness for fixing the disrupt values on both sexes specifically, on women. This suggestion is
expected to pursue the elimination of patriarchal traditions that will lead to women’s liberation by focusing on women-centered culture (Andersen, 1984:366).

c. Promoting Women’s Capability

Women’s experience has always been associated with the home and the domestic sphere (homage manager, child-bearing, take care of husband) that make women have least interaction with the outside world. While men are placed in public sphere (social, politics, economics institutions) where they can connect to many people. The context that women are worked inside of the house adding a further limitation to women in gaining experience outside of the house. Thus, private sphere where women dominated is identified less important to public sphere (Andersen, 1984:354).

To say that the dualism of gender construction is a cause of power relationship between men and women within family that have been reconstructed according to specific circumstances that exists in society (Madsen, 2000:185), makes the typical situation of being women is lack of freedom (Young, 2005:31). Plus, it turns out family is apparently a powerful tool to help its members to adopt particular patriarchal power structure in order to be in subordinate and dominate position as women. Worse, society tends to see women as a character with ambiguity. Consequently, the confusion will create space which trigger women to gain self-empowerment.

To bring a change, feminists suggest to focus upon the important point on how to change women’s status by transforming the social and family relations
along with the independent efforts (Andersen, 1984:356). By convincing women conditions of subordination, later the set of beliefs that women can act personal and societal levels will improve their condition. The most important component encompasses the ability to attain the change is empowerment, the ability to direct and control one’s own life (Anonuevo, 1993:8). Thus, seeing self-empowerment is a tool to set their own agenda and brings women into the political sphere, both private and public and social decision-making process which they wish could take multiple roles to alleviate the burdens.

C. Review of Historical Background

In order to make this research more comprehensible, the researcher provides some related backgrounds that is related with the problems. This part contains a short introductory to Persian’s related dynasty and the patriarchal tradition of both nations.

After the Jews were conquered by the Egyptians, they settled in a land which is now called as Palestine. The first temple which was built in Saul’s reign was destroyed in 587, and after that the Jews were conquered by the Babylonian Empire. There were so many Jerusalems brought to Babylonia by king Nebuchadnezzar. These people were in the “exile” state.

Jewish struggles to defend their identity inside the land of the oppressor with their temple and their faith of their religion. So, when the first temple was destroyed because of Babylonian’s feeble fortress towards Persian, the Jews are reigned under their new oppressor, the Persians, who promised to rebuild their second temple.
1. **The Achamenid Dynasty**

Since the name of the king in *The Book of Esther* is King Ahasuerus, some scholars argued that this Persian king is the king of Archamenid dynasty. There are two parts of the dynasty: the first is about the Cyrus II’s period until the establishment of the dynasty in 525 BCE and second is from the accession of the Darius I until the fall of the throne in 330 BCE (Davidovich, 2013: 24-27).

Darius I came to power in 525, joining an uprising against the controversial ruler, Bordia, who had through coup d’etat. Darius is thought as the long relative of Cambyses II, and the equivalent descendant of the Archamid dynasty. The condition of Darius I is different, because he did not have a direct contact with the king’s current royal family, so he should prove his right to the throne (Davidovich, 2013: 28-29).

A son of Darius I, Xerxes I, succeeded him to gain the throne (486-465 BCE) after the death of his father. During Xerxes I’s reign, he began to expand his kingdom politically and regimentally. Because the status of Xerxes I is similar to his father, Darius I, he had to strengthen his position as king both nationally and internationally. Many scholars argued that Xerxes I is a basis of historical name of king Ahasuerus in *The Book of Esther*, while Esther became the queen and the leading wife during his rule (Davidovich, 2013:30-31).

2. **The Context of Patriarchy in Jewish and Persian Societies**

In Jewish Biblical society, the tradition is perpetuated with male-centered (androcentric) can be seen in their traditions’ culture. Though some of the Old Testament texts might describe matriarchal or matrilineal society, yet the presence
of patriarchal’s tradition is undisputed. Referring to this condition of society, some texts in Old Testament reflect the idea of patriarchal character of Hebrew culture, a picture of male priority and superiority (Fortress, 2013:25). Seeing Israel as a nation and as a religious community which was standardized with the male domination in family and the community members are also preserved for men, making women position lower than in the neighboring countries (Fortress, 2013:26).

In Hebrew society, women were very dependent to their fathers or brothers and the wives will become dependent to husbands. Thus, what makes women’s life all remains minor. Since patriarchal society’s main value is to preserve the family and the clan therefore sons were highly desired to bring family’s fortune and continue the family line. Yet daughters are less valued because later they will leave family and fathers even treated daughters as property to her father (Leviticus 21:7-11). Even, the virgin daughters are the main possession of their father (Fortress, 2013:28). With these explanation, reading Old Testament will directly uncover their patriarchal tradition.

Whereas in Persian society, at the the time of Xerxes I (Ahasuerus) reign the kingdom, it reveals some customs that includes the position of women in royal kingdom. In Persian society, especially the time when Xerxes positioned as a king, he had several women; some of them were his wives, others his concubines. Even the size of the royal women’s house is assumed big and consider important instrument to him. There was him whom considered as a man that passionate about women (Davidovich, 2013:30). Yet though women are dominated in Xerxes
I’s life, in his reign, the royal women are still ranked according to the nature relationship with the king. The first rank is the mother of the king and followed by his wife, and followed then by another woman (Davidovich, 2013:33). Furthermore, according to the custom, the main different of become the royal wives or royal concubines was the origin. Namely, women who came from other countries were the royal concubines (Davidovich, 2013:34). Though they came from another country, they held a high status and could have economic independence and power. They also were not limited to join the area of the royal palace like what the royal women did. After all, for the Archamenid kings it is common to have more than one woman. In fact, the reason why the candidates brought into the palace is personal and political (Davidovich, 2013).
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

A. Object of the Study

The object of this study comes from one of narratives in the Old Testament, *The Book of Esther*, in the New American Standard Bible. This bible is a Protestant Bible which is published by The Lockman Foundation in United States. The Bible follows an American Standard Version of 1901’s principle and has been revised five times since 1960, yet the researcher uses the 1972 version to conduct the research. This Bible presents two major sections which are Old Testament and New Testament.

Since Apocrypha is considered less important, the last appearance of Apocrypha is in King James Version, then it is completely removed from the Bible. The Old Testament mostly talks about the story of the chosen people of God, Israelites or Jews whom struggle to reach their Promised Land, Canaan, after the hardship of enslavement in Egypt. One book that appears to be the witness of Jewish people restoring to their community in Jerusalem is *The Book of Esther*. That this book is deeply involved with other chapters of revelation, becomes the last of old testament historical books that tells about the Jews in exile and how Persian chooses Esther as their queen. Conversely, the New Testament talks about the birth of Jesus and the early progress of Christian church.
B. Approach of the Study

To analyze the main object of this research, a literary approach is needed. The use of feminist approach in this research helps to answer the questions. According Margaret L. Andersen, in *Thinking About Women: Sociologica Perspectives on Sex and Gender*, when the concept of feminist who attempted to see women’s position in society toward the social institutions and social attitudes. Since living in a sexist society, some institutions are meant to create discriminations between men and women. Feminists believe in order to transform the society, first thing to do is reformed the structure of the social institutions where women could vocalize their liberation and acknowledging their existence as equal being. Therefore, feminism includes women’s right movement and women’s emancipation as a part of women’s effort to gain consciousness for reaching women’s equality in all aspects society by giving them access to all rights and freedom from oppressive restriction of sex, also autonomy (Lerner, 1986:237). Before feminism appeared, some women who fought as feminist agents have not make known the struggle as feminism. In this narrative Esther reveals the peak of women’s life in the ancient life. She challenges the authority exposes the anxiety of patriarchal society from being a maid to a queen of Persian empire.

C. Method of the Study

This research is a library research. The main source of this research is NASB (New American Standard Bible). The secondary sources that are used in this research are books, journals, and articles. Some of the important books are: *The
Creation of Patriarchy by Gerda Lerner, Feminist Thought by Rosemarie Tong, Thinking About Women: Sociologica Perspective on Sex and Gender by Margaret L. Andersen, Critical Theory Today by Lois Tyson, Feminist Theory and Literary Practices by Deborah L. Madsen, On Female Body Experience by Iris Marion Young, Queen of the Jews by Tal Davidovich, The Book of Hiding: Gender, Ethnicity, Annihilation by Timothy K. Beal, and Esther, Three Faces of a Queen by Linda Day, two studies from seniors: Elisabeth Marsella, entitled “Ideas of Feminism Reflected In Juliet’s Struggle In Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet” and “Ideas of Feminism Revealed in Lena Lingard’s and Antonia’s Characters as seen in Willa Charter’s My Antonia” written by Maria Goreti Tri Kurniawati.

The two basic steps of the analysis were first, to compile some related sources that related with the research. This step required comprehension on theories that used to answer the question. The first question was Esther’s description according to her position and role as a Jewish woman. In this part, the characterization theory used to explain the author and the society’s perspective on seeing Esther’s outer image and the way she spoke her mind through her acts. The second question was how the patriarchal practices in both societies depicted. The last question was how those obstacles reinforced Esther’s struggle to save her nation as a Jewish woman to present the ideas of feminism.

After compiling sufficient theories based on order, the second step, which was the analysis itself, finally executed. In analysis part, the researcher answered the two questions by using the theories that prepared in the previous step. In this step the
researcher also related each of the question and discussed it in Chapter IV. Then the last chapter will be the conclusion that covers all the findings in analysis.
CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

This chapter is divided into three parts, based on the research questions provided in chapter one. The first part is the identification of Esther’s position and role, and character as a Jewish woman portrayed in The Book of Esther. The second part explains Esther’s experience dwelt in two different nations which are Jewish and Persian. The two nations adhere patriarchal practices. The third part explains how Esther’s struggle as a Jewish woman in liberating her nation reflects the ideas of feminism.

A. The Description of Esther’s Character, Position and Role as a Jewish Woman

In this part, the researcher elaborates the description of Esther’s character and her role as a Jewish woman through her positions as Mordecai’s daughter and King Ahasuerus’ wife. As she took a significant act to prevent Jews from Haman’s evil plot on the wholesale massacre Jews, she reflects women’s struggle as a Jewish woman to be the Queen of Persian Empire.

Esther’s behavior throughout the narrative is based on her presence in the text as a whole which can be drawn from the details of her individual presentation in various events on context using the seven techniques (inward speech, description, direct speech, actions, relationship with other characters, comparison with other characters, and contrast with expectation) (Day, 1995: 24-25).
Thus, the description of Esther’s characteristics has become very important to examine her action in the text. The first point covers Esther’s position as Mordecai’s daughter and how she as a daughter plays a role as an obedient child. The second point elaborates Esther’s position as King’s Ahasuerus wife and her role as Queen of Persia in which at the same time she performs as a leader of her nation.

1. Esther as Mordecai’s Daughter

The major female character in The Book of Esther is named by two different ways. In the text, it provides two names: Hadassah and Esther. This emphasizes that those two names are for the same person. However, the number of times she is called as Hadassah is much less than she called as Esther (Davidovich, 2013:40). The twofold name by the narrator is a mark to show that she has a double identity. She stands for two different culture that builds her character as a citizen. Eventually the area where she mostly encounters with is in Persia, therefore Esther is mention more often.

“And he was bringing up Hadassah, that is Esther, his uncle’s daughter, for she had neither father nor mother. Now the young lady was beautiful of form and face, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter. (Esther 2:7)”

The issue on two names that are mentioned in the narrative text come up in a possible reason that her first name, Hadassah, was her Jewish name which she brought since she was born. While her second name, Esther, is her foreign name, a name after she entered the palace (Davidovich, 2013:40). In this case, there is no doubt that Esther was born as Hadassah yet during the time she chooses to change her name becomes Esther when she was brought into the palace.
In the same line after the text mentioned about those two names, he reveals that Esther is an orphan. This explains why she lives under the same roof with Mordecai. Mordecai’s decision to adopt Esther as a daughter is nothing else than to keep her save, because otherwise she will be trapped in a low social class, that keeps her away from economic access. (Numbers 12: 47-49, 22: 20-23, Deutronomy 14: 28-29, 17: 9-14, 24: 17-22, Jeremiah 7, Isaiah 1: 23, and Ruth 2) (Davidovich, 2013:41).

In the text, actually, it is not mentioned explicitly that Esther is under the category of ‘orphan’, Esther is just defined as a child ‘without father and mother’. The narrator possibly avoids the word ‘orphan’ because it will cause people to look her futile, since the existence of term ‘orphan’ in Jewish society means a destitute individual which relies upon other’s help. Then, a child under the absence of parents certainly needs a legislative protection. She at least, for a while did not have any protection until Mordecai took her as his daughter which allowed him to have a legal right over Esther and could do whatever he wanted.

Although Esther is described as an orphan, her ancestor is significant to her being. “Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai who has taken her as his daughter (Esther 2:15)” The name of her father is mentioned first before Mordecai’s name signifies her past life is probably precious not like other orphan which has no worth of their former life (Davidovich, 2013:42). Clearly, she is a descendant of the noble family though she lost her parents, she is still worth to have future.
Besides the short information on the importance of her heritage, she is also described as ‘the young lady’. Technically, her age requires adult’s custody to secure her. Since she has not permitted to make decision for her life, she needs someone to support her to get through ups and downs of her life and future in receptivity. This is one reason why Mordecai fully acts as her father.

Other significant description that is clearly visible that Esther’s beauty is an asset, and typically a sign of physical attractiveness. The fixation on the looks of the subject, Esther, is good looking includes the other aspect that is on the way of other people also see her. However, that everyone likes her appearance is because she contributes to this result.

Through Mordecai’s position as a father, Esther is characterized as a passive girl which does acts imposed on her rather she initiates an action. Because she feels that she still wants to keep Mordecai’s influence as a father, so she follows his command as he brings her up to Persian kingdom. Since Esther has nobody to save her after the death of her parents, therefore, it is normal that she accepts Mordecai’s treatment as a way to express her acceptance of his presence.

The strong familial relationship between Esther and Mordecai will later express on how both influence each other.

“Now there was a Jew in Susa the capital whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite, who has been taken into exile from Jerusalem with the captives who had been exiled with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had exiled (Esther 2:5-6)”.

Mordecai whom was her father’s cousin, is a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin, and has been taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar and lived with Esther in the capital of Persia, Susa. However, the absence of any Jewish characters on the first chapter
may reflect that the emergence of Mordecai represents the presence of Jewish people in a public area.

In respond to that social condition, Esther’s role as a daughter is to obey what Mordecai’s said. She is obedient to her the foster father’s command not to share her identity as a Jewish in public.

“Esther did not make known her people or her kindred, for Mordecai had instructed her that she should not make her known. (Esther 2:10)” This phrase expresses how Mordecai guides Esther to behave and act according to him as a father. Mordecai as Esther’s father attempts to educate Esther with an intention to be able to present right attitude for herself in Persian society. The reaction of Esther shows that she just received Mordecai’s treatment as a consequence of accepting him as her parent.

“And every day Mordecai walked back and forth in front of the court of the harem to learn how Esther was and how she fared (Esther 2:11)” This act of Mordecai is to find how things were going to her. For he has a purpose, he wants to make sure that Esther is prevented from any harm that will possibly be done to her as a foreign girl. Fortunately, during the beauty contest, Esther successfully finds favor in the eyes of all who sees her and she finally becomes a new queen for Persian. Though Esther’s position is now equal to his uncle, as a nationalistic Jewish, Mordecai still continues to serve his guidance to Esther. She still hides her family connection with Mordecai in order to make herself secure and avoid the unnecessary suspicion of her actions to benefit her nation.
In the light of above, the fact that Esther conceals her identity is to keep the secret information about her identity.

“Esther had not yet made known her kindred or her people, even as Mordecai had commanded her, for Esther did what Mordecai told her as she had done when under his care (Esther 2:20)”

Even, in this phrase, she still holds her consistency to conceal her Jewish identity.

Esther’s familial ties and her status within her family and people are significant aspects that showing her Jewishness as integral part of her. Compared to the previous phrases, the use of the negative expression to provide a condition that must be obliged by Esther, “Esther did not make known her people or kindred (Esther 2:10)” before between being taken to the harem and king’s place, yet this second phrase will lead to her fixed manner from she becomes a queen onwards.

In the other hand, this second phrase also reveals her burden of being nationalistic to her descendants. She is fully aware that her nation is her responsibility.

Following the time Esther entered the Persian palace, the mourning of Mordecai caused Esther to ask him to look for the condition outside of the palace. Mordecai reveals the fear of “one law” that threatens the Jews, even he tore his clothes and put them on sack-cloth and ashes, along with loud bitter wail as the symbol of grief (Esther 4:1). Esther’s role as a daughter has got her a big affection toward Mordecai that spontaneously makes her send her servants to serve Mordecai clothes as an empathy. After all, Esther is a grown-up woman with elevated position in palace, yet the ties between her and Mordecai show that her most unusual act to obey Mordecai as she had done in her childhood, implicitly describes that she is still under his guidance (Davidovich, 2013:51).
However, in the new place Esther is still strongly connected to Mordecai even after she moved to Persian society. She follows Mordecai’s commands as she had when she was raised by him as his daughter. The continuation of Mordecai’s parental suggests that Esther is still in childlike position. Though after she went through some events in her life, the relationship between her and Mordecai is naturally growing because they finally work as a team to save their nation.

2. Esther as a Wife of King Ahasuerus

After gaining success in a long invasion, finally, King Ahasuerus could make 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia reign by him (Esther 1:1).

“in the third year of his reign, he gave a banquet for all his princes and attendants the army officers of Persia and Media, the nobles, and the princes of his provinces being in his presence, when he displayed the riches of his royal glory and the splendor of his great majesty for many days, 180 days. (Esther 1:3-4)”

This appears as the first banquet of the third year of his reign only for the high officials and nobles that explicitly relate to display a ritual that design to empower the social relations. The banquet itself pictured a way of the king assign his hierarchy power where each guest is forced to renew their commitments to the king (Oren, 2009:143)

On the seventh day of the feast, the king is high with his wine. He made his eunuch to send Vashti a message which aimed to display her appearance in his banquet. “to bring Queen Vashti before the king with her royal crown in order to display her beauty to the people and the princess, for she was beautiful. (Esther 1:11)”. This verse implies that the king commands Vashti is obliged to dress in royal apparel.
Unfortunately, Queen Vashti refuses to come at the king’s command delivered by the eunuchs. Then, the king became very angry and his wrath burned within him (Esther 1:12). Since Vashti does not obey the request, and she also did not give any excuses to the eunuch about her refusal, the king felt disrespected by her.

“And in the presence of the king and the princes, Memucan said, “Queen Vashti has wronged not only the king but also all the princes, and all the peoples who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. For the queen’s conduct will become known to all women causing them to look with contempt on their husbands by saying, “King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vasthi to be brought in to his presence, but she did not come” (Esther 1:16,17)”

The event that made Vashti refused to obey her husband affects to all the wives in kingdom, which most likely will have same reaction toward the issue; therefore, an order is made to manage women’s behavior toward their husbands “...Then all women will give honor to their husbands, great and small (Esther 1:20)”.

“If it pleases the king, let a royal edict be issued by him and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media so that it cannot be repealed, that Vashti should come no more into the presence of King Ahasuerus, and let the king give her royal position to another who is more worthy than she (Esther 1:19)”

Vashti’s grand refusal undermines a woman’s relationship with her husband, that Vashti should degrade from her position and give it to another. They banish Queen Vashti and inform the kingdom with a letter of finding a replacement of her.

Not long after the former queen’s disposal, the King Ahasuerus accepts the attendants’ suggestion to pick a new queen by holding a beauty contest. The contestants will be chosen from all over the empire, “And let the king appoint
oversees in all the provinces of his kingdom (Esther 2:3). Also, the long preparation of beautifying should be followed by each of contestants. Each of them is given a chance to try out for the king’s favor after the king summons them in turn.

The first time Esther meets the king is when she is brought to his private room. “In the evening she would go in and in the morning, she would return...” (Esther 2:14). The group of women that the eunuchs control as concubines, thus providing more sexually based reference. Because in the end the women who returned to the king, if he calls her name but also if the king unless was pleased with her (Esther 2:14).

“And the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she found favor and kindness with him more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti (Esther 2:17). Finally, Esther’s status and relationship with the king are elevated. Ahasuerus’s decision to chooses her creates an instant change to Esther’s position. That Esther is now superior than all the virgins and even all the women in palace. Besides her new status, the way people perceives Esther is affected from the image of the former queen, Vashti. Their contrast qualities make Esther as the type of the queen that the society desires (Day, 1995:45). For now, she is in kingdom, her new position as King Ahasuerus’s wife makes her having a new role as a woman that is superior than all the women. Finally, she becomes the role model of the women in Persia, her attitudes toward Persians become the parameter of women toward the society.

Esther reaches a high position among the royal women as what Vashti has in the past. In the hope of being more obedient, she, however, feared to approach
her husband first. Since the king does not summon her for thirty days (Esther 4:11), Esther only has her days in the palace without a meet even for a short conversation with the king. There is no sign of affection or closeness between them.

Nonetheless, Esther becomes very real after she learns the threat from the outside of the palace, only after Mordecai refuses to pay homage to Haman, and Haman stated that Jewish is a rebel.

“Then Haman said to the King Ahasuerus “There is certain people scattered and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from those of all other people, and they do not observe the king’s laws, so it is not in the king’s interest to let them remain (Esther 3:8)”

A copy of edict was spread over the kingdom, after Haman bribed the king to execute the plan on the destruction of Jews. She decided to approach the king. Yet in this occasion she did approach him as a king not as her husband.

“And it happened when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, she obtained favor in his sight; and the king extended to Esther the golden scepter which was in his hand. So Esther came near and touched the top of the scepter (Esther 5:2)”

Esther appeared to the king in her initial meeting when the king was sitting on his chair with his face toward to the door. After preparing her royal robes and her fasting for three days, she assured herself to come to the king. Yet she is not dare to come straightforward to the inner court and just stand still to obtain favor from the king. Because Esther is aware of king’s love of honored, she realizes that it is the king’s personality weakness. Then, Esther puts her royal garments to look appealing to meet him. Unlike Vashti who dishonors the king in the front of his guests to appear in her royal crown, Esther honors the king with her way of dressing (Green, 2011:69). The king’s reaction is only raised his scepter instead of
standing. This was a sign that they are not close. Yet even later their manner in communicating expresses formality. Though Esther is noted having a physical closeness with Ahasuerus, yet both are emotionally distanced. It shows that her relationship with the king is business-like and professional (Day, 1995:186).

In the other hand, the interaction between Esther with the Persian court’s element makes her learn a greater challenge as a woman. Her position as a wife of King Ahasuerus and her knowledge about the particularities of Persian procedure, affect her authority in the king’s court. It is mentioned that no one has a right to approach the king without being summoned, not his slaves, maids, eunuchs, advisors, women, and so forth, without exception or they will sentence to death (Esther 4:11). However, the issue of summoning made a turning point in Esther’s life, she was breaking the rules and coming to the king without being summoned. Her way risking her life is an act of bravery and such a personal degree of growth and change. Also, her willingness to undergo the hardship is a proof that she is strong enough in physical and mentality to choose the right action without Mordecai’s instruction. She seems neither need the emotional support from the eunuchs nor her uncle. Her source of strength is also proven in her ability to move from one culture to another culture to the other and back (Oren, 2009:158). In such a way, Esther finds that she is under a strong regulation of court system and she quickly learns a proper way to act within the system.

The role of Esther as king Ahasuerus’s wife has changed the rule of summoning. Now she is the one who named the one she will summon. The king actually allowed this change, even, he asked Esther that she can have all she
desired. “Then the king said to her, “What is troubling you, Queen Esther? And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it will be given to you (Esther 5:3)”. This spontaneous reaction of the king describes his ignorance of the next events that will happen.

Esther summons the king and Haman whom she never meets and speaks to her banquet. It is Esther herself who mentions the names of the guests. This event occurs once more; the second banquet the king repeating his question about Esther’s wish, “What is your petition, for it shall be granted to you. And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be done (Esther 5:6)”, to emphasize Esther’s new status as she summons persons by the name. From this occasion, Esther does not miss the chance of her power in summoning the king and Haman. While Esther gaining king’s favor, she puts a request to the king for making a private banquet for both of them. This use of banquet is to foil the enemy’s, Haman, plan cunningly (Miles, 2015:137).

At the first banquet, Esther cleverly puts her request in two forms of conditional sentence—“If I have found favor in the sight of the king” and “If it please the king” (Esther 5:8) before she continuing her private invitation for both. These ways of requesting are appealed to the king. More importantly, Esther’s manipulation of gaining king’s interest is a form of maintaining attention from the king to use him to her advantage (Green, 2011:70). Thus, Esther demonstrates as the most intelligence than other characters in a way to think clearly and reasonably. Also, it is proven that her strategic way is implemented in the series of banquet that she made as a way to solve the issue of annihilation.
Besides Esther's strategic way of thinking, she is characterized as a person who is moderate in language and expression. The sense of balance is depicted on her way to choose language and expression as she conveying her opinions and concerns (Day, 1995:201). However, the way she expresses the petitions before the king, and tends to base her arguments equally upon two reasons, the approval of the king and his good judgement, is a balance manner. The more sense of balance is seen on she expresses her concern. Contrast to Vashti, Esther is not totally self-absorbed, she is caring her own life as well as her people. Esther’s actions affect not only to soothe the anarchy of destructing Jews yet she also takes respects toward Persian laws that takes degree of overall power to influence the kingdom.

Esther’s speaking ability is very eloquent and thoughtful. At first, she is in a very tactful manner when she speaks in front of the court, then the second time she knows how to influence the king by involving his emotion in her speech. She also masters an art of rhetoric. The way she presents her petition in front of the king makes the king put her on his priority since she provides the strongest argument on it. Thus, what makes Esther easy to influence people with her speaking.

B. Esther’s Experience toward Patriarchal Practices in Jewish and Persian Societies

Patriarchy, a term that is used to see the institutionalized system of male domination over women and children in the family and male extension of dominance in all important institution to deprive women to have access of power
In *The Creation of Patriarchy*, Lerner said that the focus of patriarchy lies on the patriarchal family that constantly distributes the value and rules that appropriate to the sexes (Lerner, 1986:212). This reflects a family mirrors not only to order their kids to follow the laws yet they are reinforced that order (Lerner, 1986:216-217). So, the oppression of a woman starts from her family. As a breadwinner, father thinks he has to obligate the system that shows his higher position than the daughter.

The condition that Lerner expresses is similar to what Esther faces in both of societies which are Jewish and Persian. The leader of society are all men, such as Mordecai and King Ahasuerus. Mordecai takes over Esther since she needs a legal protection after the death of her parents. The significance of Mordecai’s guidance holds Esther attitude as a Jewish after entering the Persian palace. Also, in palace, King Ahasuerus led a declaration to remove his former queen and give the royal position to a girl that can take honor on him. The cause of banishing the former queen pictured the way of Persian man valued women.

Esther as a daughter is aware of her role to fully obedient to her foster father’s request. She knows the exact condition of her society that demands her obedience toward her father. Her way of honoring her parent makes her as a daughter, could feel the attachment between both. Apparently, this attachment is making a child felt safe, secure, and protected. Thus, from attachment, Esther could create a basis form of trust on Mordecai.

“So it came about when the command and decree of the king were heard and many young ladies were gathered to Susa the capital into the custody of Hegai, that Esther was taken to the king’s palace into the custody of Hegai, who was in charge of the women. (Esther 2:8)”
Mordecai makes to bring Esther after he heard that Esther fulfilled the requirements (beautiful, young, and virgin (Esther 2:3)) for her to be sought by the king as a wife. Aside from Esther could fulfill the requirements, Mordecai wants Esther knew that she should put Persian law first than Jewish law and respect it (Green, 2011:65). The fact that Esther is taken with other beautiful young girls to palace is merely a normal occasion for Persian. Since they are unmarried girls and there is no law that againsts taking them to palace, and they may join the beauty contest. This is obviously a way to emphasize her character of being obedient to Mordecai’s decision.

Esther is totally under Mordecai’s parental guidance just because Jewish patriarchal tradition demands men, as the patriarch, owned the ability to lead. That men occupy the first place of citizen in Jewish community, instantly women achieve a lower legal and social position than the other neighboring countries. The system in society totally prescribes the complete dependency and subordination which trapped daughter or wife to rely on their father, husband, or brother (Fortress, 2013:26). This pictured of male domination that makes an assumption if sex is determined an eligibility to have an opportunity to make decision in their life. Then, Esther is suffered from limitation to develop herself. She is not able to choose something according to her decision. Though Esther is better educated and better situated with her uncle, she has to face her problem for not expressing her own idea toward in some events in her life. That she should adapt with Jewish patriarchal value as a child, makes her has no capacity of authority to make decision and power to control herself.
Like what Lot is done to his own daughters. In order to avoid the sexual abuse from the two strangers that receive the invitation of Lot to stay in his house, Lot brings her daughters out to serve the guests (Genesis 19:8). This an unacceptable bargaining prove that patriarchal culture is undisputed, and daughters should willingly accept the fact that to survive is to perform their role of being obedient to their father.

Mordecai’s decision to bring her to Susa is his way practicing Jewish’s patriarchal tradition. Jewish tradition makes women to obey and let the men hold the decision for women. That daughter not highly desired to preserve the family’s fortunes (Fortress, 2013:26), it is normal that Esther cannot make her opinion be heard whether she wants to follow the beauty contest or not. Honoring the role of parents as guidance in children’s life sometimes makes a misconception that parents could control the whole aspects of living a child. Often, children are forced to adapt with parents’ decision.

Not only the Jewish, the Persians perform the patriarchal tradition that allows women also in a subordinate position. Like what happened to Vashti, the former queen of Persian, after she made refusal of the king’s command to be brought in king’s banquet with her royal crown, she is disposed from the kingdom. The replacement of Vashti is seen as a great influence upon women, officials, and marital relationship within kingdom (Day, 1995:203). Vashti’s refusal is simply taken as a threat to Persian manhood. Since according to Persian’s men view, Vashti violates the men’s standards which are: differential, obedient, and beautiful object to men (Beal, 1997:45). Her action affects to the
king’s decision, that makes him to look on a new queen. Regarding to that condition, Vashti is a lesson concerning about what happens to women if they refuse to participate under patriarchal rules.

Allowing herself to enter the king’s beauty contest after the banishment of queen Vashti, Esther steps into a new world which requires her to deal with the situation by performing her feminine traits. The form of beauty contest explicitly reveals the way Persians regard women. Persian men practice a law to dominate women by exploiting their body from the process of beauty contest. It can be seen the regulations made to select the royal women in certain degree is only required their physical attractiveness. It is proven that the candidates should be a young woman which is virgin or at their marriageable age and of course having a beautiful face, “And let the king appoint overseers in all the provinces of his kingdom that they may gather every beautiful, young, virgin, to Susa the capital... (Esther 2:3)”. Just because their bodies are socially “acceptable” through the eyes of men, the candidate who win the contest is unconsciously allowed herself to fall under the “ideal” standard of Persian beauty.

Though the process takes a year, the two significant points in seven stages of process in becoming royal woman that agreed as a treatment of the men benefit their position toward women in lower status are the beautification treatment and the crucial night with the king. The beautification of women is a stage where women are ordered to follow the two parts of treatments which are six months with oil of myrrh and six months with spices and cosmetics (Esther 2:12) as the completion of the procedure. The treatment should be fulfilled as a way to reach a
chance to be succeed in the beauty contest and way to satisfy the king (Davidovich, 2013:82).

Besides the two parts of the treatments, the crucial night with the king is the most explicit aspects of sexuality. Each woman spends their little time with Ahasuerus, only in one night. It appears that these women hold a status as a concubine or sexual paramour, in the palace which makes clear that sexual activity is an important aspect of his impression toward the girls. In the end, the king will only summon them back if he calls her name or if she has given the king pleasure (Day, 1995:44).

Those from what Esther had experienced in beauty contest, it reveals that women in subordinate class expected to serve the men in upper classes sexually whether they want or not (Lerner, 1986:88). They simply become a sex object that belongs to the master which have to commit a passive, inert matter, and its movement is controlled by the cause (Young, 2005:78). Clearly, Persian men’s treatment, reveal that the way of treating female body do not present women’s cultural experience yet it presents male’s institutions on how they establish their authority over women. A woman’s presence is marginalized and they expect to be an obedient wife, a beautiful young virgin, or a concubine. This construction made Esther become a passive subject and at the same time as an object of male’s enjoyment (Oren, 2009:145).

Though Esther is assessed as superior by Ahasuerus primarily because his emotional reason to her, Esther is appeared somewhat more passive to attain her favored status (Day, 1995:45). In narrative, it also reports that Esther reached a
high political position among the women in kingdom yet she still not influenced
the political situation in King Ahasuerus kingdom. The moment when the issue of
annihilation of the Jews spread over the palace as a reaction of Haman toward
Mordecai’s dishonor, Esther is deprived from that such information. The rule that
placing royal women and king’s other women in different place made women
inside of the palace unable to follow the issue outside of their area. Furthermore,
the status of royal woman also does not count as significant to join the lawmaking
in a kingdom. Apparently, the laws that made to destroy the Jews is composed by
the king and Haman, his confidant by excluding Esther from it, “The couriers
went out impelled by the king’s command while the decree was issued in Susa the
capital; and while the king and Haman sat down to drink, the city of Susa was in
confusion (Esther 3:15)”.

The setting of the laws of Persian discriminates women to have their own
freedom to participate in any aspects of kingdom’s, “...according to its script and
to every people according to their language, that every man should be the master
in his own house and the one who speaks in the language of his own people
(Esther 1:22)”. From that point of view, men view women are naturally
undisciplined, and men has to restrain female access to power by constructing
them as cultural products which is innocence and pure (Oren, 2009:147).

Even, before that law is conducted, the situation in Persian society in
banquets, required taking meals in separating places, unless they practice it in
their domestic life (Brisson, 'De Regn. Pers..' 2. pp. 273-276). Then, the custom
explains that women’s position is elsewhere and away from the public eye which
excluded from Persian politics. Men want to cover the wife’s behaviour, to protect their honor and social reputation: separate himself from their women, insist them to remain veiled in public, and restrict their social behavior to ‘women’s spaces (Hancock, 2012:18). That is to say, a structure is functioned to see inequality of opportunity, oppression and domination that also offers a way to provide constraints for individual to pursue freedom upon the available options (Young, 2005:21). Also, the terms public and private in relationship to male and female roles serves explanation to describe the limitations living in patriarchal society (Hancock, 2012:2). Therefore, it is common that Esther is lack of sources to involve in such of events. Esther suffer from discrimination on women.

Because men exploit the area of women’s lives which mean men benefit that from patriarchal structure, it gains more subordination for women. Though Esther position and status in palace is far more profitable, Esther still developing her relationship from obedient child to more independent woman (Davidovich, 2013:52). Mordecai is still remained the one in charge to control Esther being. He controls over her even Esther has no longer in his custody: “And every day Mordecai walked back and forth in front of the court of the harem to learn how Esther was and how she fared (Esther 2:11)”. Mordecai afraid if he loses his control over her since Esther no longer in his custody. Even, after Esther elevates her status in kingdom, Esther had not yet made known her kindred or her people, even as Mordecai had commanded her, for Esther did what Mordecai told her (Esther 2:20). She would still obey him as she had done in her childhood, since it is her responsibility as a daughter of him.
Not only making Esther to conceal her identity, Mordecai also persuades Esther to face the king after the issue about Jews spread. That the reality Jewish political in exile has no certain structure, the one of them which is prudent and reaching the success among them will be the leader (Green, 2011:68), and that is Mordecai. It is him that marks the new law for not bowing down after Haman to not cause a further assimilation for the Jews as a demonstration that his leadership is real. That Esther is still under his care, he made his force toward Esther to make a decisive action.

However, Mordecai has had a greater influence upon her throughout her early life even when she later became the Queen of Persia, the highest corridors of power, that Mordecai lacked of. Esther has her whole adulthood life with Mordecai. She moved to Persian court in pursuing Mordecai’s decision. The act of Esther being passive is supported by the idea of Israelite society which comprised system of authority which male possessed caused them to culturally legitimate to make decisions (Tucker, 2008:483).

It could be said that in patriarchal society, men extend the women’s limits by embracing the idea of women have no ability to reason (Sultana, 2011:4). Then, women should be under supervision of men. The more important point is women are forced to take a role as an obedient to honor those who hold the greater power than them. Clearly, even in a family, a daughter can learn to adopt certain postures as a subordinated and dominated creature to suit the basic patriarchy culture (Madsen, 2000:185).
By experiencing two different culture, Esther knew that patriarchal tradition happened in both of nations. They both contribute to women’s subordination. Moreover, women are tended to accept that kind of treatment that degrade them and take it as natural thing. Even the various forms of subordination which have quality of discriminate, control, and exploit women are counted as a proof that men are superior to women.

C. The Ideas of Feminism Reflected in Esther’s Struggle in Liberating her Nation

From the previous analysis, it can be shown that from the structure of societies in Jewish and Persian, male dominates in almost all aspects of living. It contributes a discrimination toward women which constitute a subordinate position of women and a violation of basic human rights and obstacle to achieve women’s equality, development and peace.

The obstacles that Esther experienced in both of societies is related with the sustainability of patriarchal culture. That sexism and patriarchy are support one another. Naturally, sexism is existed in patriarchal societies where women are limited to reach access and deprive them to have such power. Just because they believe in women’s natural limitation, the leader of societies are all men. It is Mordecai that took over Esther’s being, her right of having voice of her own which finally shapes her passivity. Also, the law in Persian, clearly degrade women’s value as a being. The lack of women in access of political power, made the laws glorify men’s name and restrict women to contribute in kingdom’s household. Thus, the practice of patriarchal tradition that made men have a legal
and social position in society, forced women to demonstrate complete dependency and obedience to father or their husband. Therefore, to transform the institutions and support women’s liberation will help to see the equal position of women in society.

These conditions denied women respectability inside of the society. To become a woman is ready to face two alienations; to play being a man is stressful yet play being a woman is a pipedream. Then to become a woman mean became the object, the Other—and the Other remain subject (Beauvoir, 1989:51). That male is defined as human being yet female human being however she behaves is copied men’s style. This condition makes woman lives in contradiction, as a human she is a free subject yet the situation forced a woman to deny her existence both culturally and socially (Tong, 2005:31). That the actual problem for women is to reject these situation and search self-fulfillment in transcendence. Thus, to see the possibilities women need to open up their own interest and perspective seriously, believing that women are not inferior to men (Andersen, 1997:8).

That Esther is aware she has a talent that Mordecai does not have—the female wiles which can be classified as source of power yet in a subtler way. As what Vashti represents, women does not have to show their power in the empire, but with the right knowledge to present their power as women such manipulating the king by using their feminine wiles is actually showing women’s strength. However, if women lack of true understanding of her mind they will not able to recognize her power.
Instead of blaming her condition of being woman, Esther shows a transformation that woman actually is a subject that can determine her own acts to perform independency. From her characterization, Esther is at first as a passive and obedient woman yet through some circumstances she learns that she can transform to be brave, independent, and powerful. Though at first, she found that both cultures are straightly hold traditions that limits women’s movement, she proves to society that women are not just a complementary being, yet women are also worth to take their role as men do in society to regard them as equal being to men. That Esther forms her action to save her nation from Haman’s evil plot showing women’s capability in promoting herself as a leader.

Experiencing two different cultures, Esther finds that both cultures are treated woman and men differently. There is certain gender expectation in patriarchal society that makes women forced to approve men’s power. Often by following that rules, woman as an individual loses access and status in public. Clearly, the system in patriarchal society taught masculinity and femininity are having different condition that makes women lack of confidence to speak their mind. That Esther has awareness to make an initiation to save her nation is reflected in her struggle as a woman to fight equal rights, free from men’s control over her body, and her capability as a human. She escapes of being the Other by showing her action by becoming a queen and subverting the political condition in Persia with her skill as a woman. Her actions are matches to the three ideas of feminism which are:

1. **Pursuing Equality**
The idea that feminism wants is to pursue equality. That women also a part of the society, women also demand equal opportunities and right which also as an attempt to reform the society in aimed to give all groups equal opportunities (Andersen, 1997:320). Pursuing equality is a quality that Esther has in her way of saving her nation. Incidentally, Esther got a chance to become queen. Mordecai as a foster father, a Jewish patriarch in exile, utilizes his power of persuasion to convince Esther to thwart against the evil plot that Haman has prepared. As a loyal Jewish, Mordecai, makes Esther to do according to his wish. Esther became a woman that could adapt in patriarchal society. The more she learns the expectation of society toward woman, the more she could control the situation.

The unequal position of men and women in Jewish society is rooted from the social construction that constituted by male-domination in family and religious community (Fortress, 2013:26). It is proven when the condition of Jewish in exile, the society made Mordecai represents Jewish outside of the palace. That the society trusts men much in public and this relates to the concept of relationship between men and women that depicted as asymmetry. Being based in a public-private dichotomy society, women are restricted to go to public area (Tucker, 2008:482).

That Jewish women totally dependent to their father or brother is intended to make a woman in family such daughter is less appreciated (Fortress, 2013:27). Act as Esther’s father after the death of both of her parents makes Esther spent almost her entire life to be adapted with Mordecai’s instructions. That family affects to daughters’ development, such their way of valuing themselves, having
preferences, and ability to have capacity to decide their way to live their life depends their future (Okin, 1989:97). Family does not hold the development of autonomy in children. Then it is normal that Esther accustomed by Mordecai’s instruction to behave according what Jewish tradition wished.

As what society sees, women are not destined to have opportunity as men enjoyed privilege in the institutions of society. But with the right way to present their awareness as women, they can reach their rights as individual that men already have (Andersen, 1997:323). At first, Esther is conditioned herself as passive and obedient. Yet she realized after she became the wife of King Ahasuerus and leaves Mordecai’s guidance, she gradually can develop herself as a woman with action. She becomes a balance person; she behaves according to how she thinks about situation. She could make her own choice for her life and her nation. Because in the end the work of parents is to make their children consider about their advice and not determine their fate and they just become a team not dominates each other.

“Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, “Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens also will fast in the same way. And thus, I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:6)”

By winning the beauty contest, Esther proves that her position now is equal to Mordecai as political actor in Persian kingdom. That she can persuades him according to her wish, and Mordecai automatically accepts that request, “So Mordecai went away and did just as Esther had commanded him (Esther 4:17)”, Esther certainly reforms women’s position in society. As what the condition in
danger, Esther’s position is now increased her opportunity to contribute in social change. She proves that by becoming a queen, she can re-learn her role in society.

Although women are actually different in physical to men, women actually can achieve role as men do. That the roles they assign may different, yet they can work together as a team and women are not just a complementary but a suitable partner to men. Like what happened to Esther, Mordecai is the political actor who gains favor outside of the palace yet Esther is also a political actor who strengthen Jewish people in Persia.

Women are bound to particular roles such as nurturing, because the perception of women in Old Testament implies that God creates women unequal to men. women are divinely designed as a complementary. The misunderstanding of God’s word makes men to be considerate with the weaker partner (women) and provide a protection towards women. Just because men have authority over women, that does not mean they are superior and bear greater responsibility than women. In the end they both actually only not have the same physical character, yet they both have distinct roles that could complement each other.

To revive the misleading view of women in Old Testament, Esther also proves that as a wife of a king, she can make her voice is heard by the king. Right after the issue of Jews’ annihilation spread, Esther struggles to reveal the evil plot of Haman, with her strategies she fights against the law that Persian has determined and plead her nation to the king.

“Then she said, “If it pleases the king and I have found favor before him and the matter seems proper to the king and I am pleasing in his sight, let it be written to revoke the letter devised by Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all
the king’s provinces. For how can I endure to see the calamity which shall befall my people, and how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindered?” (Esther 8:5-6)

She earns result from her struggle, she can finally make her husband who holds the stability within the society accept her request to revoke the Haman and his decision to destroy the Jews. Women as group of people that considered as minority in palace bears a discrimination that how women are still consider in low position despite their high position in kingdom. Then if women are still made no significant to contribute inside of kingdom’s household is common.

Unlike Vashti, Esther struggles not only to prove she worth the right to voice her own right to have voice but she refuses the function of being a commodity to be brought and shared to other men as an object. Reforming the social condition, Esther success brought the feminist idea that to destroy the sex/gender system in society is the key of releasing women from oppression and instead of seeing others’ difference as “inferior” they deserve “unique” for that (Tong, 2009:49, 207).

2. Freeing from Men’s Control

Freedom is an aspect of feminism that women needed to express their experience in life. Yet the systemic nature of gender creates male domination where men through masculine ideas control women’s feminine sexuality. (Madsen, 2000:153). That the structure of patriarchal society produces a subordination of women as a result of both sex and gender relationship, women are vulnerable to oppression. The main character, Esther, reveals the idea that women surely need freedom from men’s sexist behavior. Experiencing patriarchal society made Esther realized that women’s body are a place of pleasure to men.
Their body are exploited, which means women are existed only to be used and abused.

After accepting Mordecai’s instruction to join the beauty contest, Esther realized that Persian men regards women as an object of their pleasure. Thorough the text, what actually describes much about the condition is lied on King Ahasuerus description of mind. *Eros* is represented by his way of thinking on wine and women at the banquet at the first chapter (Green, 2011:63). King Ahasuerus is depicted with lack of wisdom and only search for his own pleasure. The case of Vashti disposal after not paying honor toward him, he just quickly removes her function of her by making a beauty contest to fulfill the empty position. It is a natural thing to Persian, if men cannot appreciate women fully, since they accept polygamy and demand their wives to be absolutely obedient to their husbands (Beauvoir, 1989:85). Men determining women’s experience, and this kind of relationship was invented by male that women is wished to voluntary accept this condition.

The laws that restrict women as a direct effect of the disposal Queen Vashti makes Persian men expects that women are needed to reform their attitude toward men. Women are needed to pay more honor and make men be the master of his own house (Esther 1:22). To hide the big fear of Persian manhood, a beauty contest is held to search a woman that can adhere the Persian norms. The three requirements are proposed by the attendants; the candidates should be young, pretty and virgin (Esther 2:3). Not only that, the process of beautifying, took a year which also made the contestant to ‘goes in’ to the king, leaving one harem in
the evening and returning the next morning to compose sexual encounter with the king. Hegai, the man who in charge to this process suggests the contestants if they want to get a better chance to success and treatment from the king, they can make themselves pretty with the cosmetics that he provides. Clearly, they were beautified not for their own sake but to satisfying the king (Day, 1995:82).

The process of treatment and sorting are inseparable from men’s control. They always watching to make the process are according to their standard. That Esther is aware to the condition makes her learn to conform the gender expectations that Persian men made. She first accepts Hegai’s suggestion; she takes anything she thinks useful before went in the king’s room. Second, she demonstrates the beauty she has to get the respective king’s notice. Then after she wins king’s favor, she never exercises any public authority because after she becomes a queen she never gets a summon from the king in thirty days to brought in public area. In the end, Esther appears as a contrast of Vashti, a figure that represents women objectively beautiful, passive, obedient, and follow the traditional domestic roles.

In the light of fact that Esther’s attributes of physical are central aspect of her portrayal, Esther’s beauty facilitates the entire story which she wins king’s favor and her status in shorthand. Her arsenal skill to impress everyone which she encounters is another ability to make favorable impression to people; “she gained favor of all who saw her (Esther 2:15)”. Not only that she also exhibits political strength by presenting her power of her female wiles.
That women no need present outward sign of power in palace, because they can simply have their power by practicing their female wiles to manipulate the king and take advantage of weakness of his personality, she has already strengthened the position of Jewish people in Persian (Green, 2011:69). She wants to prove that she can undergo hardship and become a stronger person by accepting Persian’s men treatment toward her body. Furthermore, as a woman Esther succeed to make decision concerning her body. She decided to fit the situation with her female wiles to free from paternalistic domination and emphasizing her power as a Jewish woman in exilic regime.

3. Promoting Women’s Capability

Patriarchal paternalistic laws restrict women’s options on the grounds that such limits, yet she braves enough to take risky decision about design the banquet enables her to defeat Haman’s evil plot quickly. However, by attending the second banquet means the king already approve the unheard request of Esther. She begins to appeal the king favor and emotions. Esther designs her banquet to blow Haman while manipulating King Ahasuerus’ action (Miles, 2015:138). As one can see, Esther has a talent that Haman does not have and that is female wiles which can be identified as source of power in a subtler way (Green, 2011:69). The opening banquet’s concern is to put Ahasuerus in a good mood so her wishes can be granted easily. Her awareness of his weakness for alcohol, “And the king said to Esther on the second day also as they drank their wine at the banquet... (Esther 7:2)” presents as her strategy to make Ahasuerus in a low intelligence which further it can affect to his way of deciding something (Green, 2011:70).
Tension is built as she pleads her life and that for her nation. For the first time she mentioned her origin with her people. Twice, she aligns herself with the Jews though she is not explicitly using the term “Jew”, she uses “my life...my people” and “I and my people” (Esther 7:3-4). Still, she considers Jewish a lot like her. Thus, also emphasizing that it is his queen and the people pf his queen that Haman is trying to destroy. As she dramatizes the plan of genocide “to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated (Esther 7:4)”, Esther never comes straightforward to say she is a Jew. But she continues to describe the Jews’ downturns as she manages her flow of her speaking. Then she explicitly discloses the villain behind the evil plot with four expressions, “a foe and an enemy, is this wicked Haman! (Esther 7:6)”. 

The result of Esther’s exercises her new position made the king took the autonomous decision for the first time. Though Esther was called queen, she did not rule. Esther still occupied a weak and precarious position in her thought at least—for she uncertain about her power. She realized that as a wife of the king, she does not wield political power herself (Hancock, 2012:17). Therefore, she reenacts the role assign to her by the patriarchal system as a wife to become national heroine (Hancock, 2012:15) that obtains power from her husband. Meanwhile Haman is abased himself before Esther, Esther chooses to act as a heroin on the behalf of Jewish people. For Haman is summoned twice is a cheese in a mouse trap. He fell on it and it results on his own death. He hangs on his own gallows that he made for Mordecai (Esther 7:10).
After Esther successfully removes Haman, she executes her plan to save the Jews by making the king to grant Jewish rights and defend their lives by permitting them to destroy and to annihilate people of province that might attack them (Esther 8:11). Not only that she promotes Mordecai after she revealed her affiliation with Mordecai. He became vizier, the position that was once occupied by Haman (Esther 8:15).

As previously demonstrated, the relationship between Esther and the king at first involving an emotional love and affection yet it changes in the end with a respect over the queen. They began their formal relationship when they discuss about kingdom matters. In this narrative, it is Esther who does not express a great feeling to Ahasuerus. It shows that she is not afraid of Ahasuerus and her attitude toward him is also distant, professional and business-like. In the end, Esther proves that her position as a queen at the intersection of world can bet he power of subvert the unjust of social order. By breaking cultural conditioning, she could make a change and promote her capability as a human.

Esther is one woman that confronted in female space with one man as judge, but making actions benefit for others. Breaking the stereotypes of femininity, but not becoming masculine, she oversteps male-female polarity while maintaining her feminine female attitude (Hancock, 2012:26). She takes consideration that she lives in men’s world. The adaptation of her self-concept as Other woman makes she still can manage the situation to her advantage (Miles, 2015:140).
Her awareness of the king’s weakness for alcohol is also a signal that the king has low intelligence that can be further weaken in decision-making. She also gains attention to make the king with her two sufficient banquets that defeats Haman instantly. Esther’s combination of ability that can execute a plan perfectly is saved the Jews in the end. She proves that she can take over the political situation with her own source of power as woman and participate in political life only by informal approach with King Ahasuerus. Under her leadership, she determines her own fate of Jews’ life.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the writer is going to conclude the analysis that cover three problem formulations. The first question is about the character and characterization of Esther as the main character. Esther is described as passive and obedient yet she undergoes transformation to become more independent woman by showing her capability to think about how to save her nation.

To answer the second problem formulation, the patriarchal societies where Esther settled, the writer pictures toward her experience adapting in two different culture. The patriarchal system that presented in both nations are kept women in a subordination number of ways. The form of subordination that Esther faced takes in form of discrimination, control, and exploitation.

That the common agreement women are not equal to men since they just made form men’s rib is affected on how men appreciate women. Since women are often considered as complementary being, the treatment of Mordecai as Esther’s foster father is made her lack of freedom to choose her own way of living. She just accepts her role as a daughter in a passive and obedient way. Plus, after she agreeing her foster father to join the beauty contest, she faces another consequence of living under male’s domination in her societies, that is exploitation toward her body. Right after she wins the beauty contest, she manages herself by being Other to the king because she still cannot join the lawmaking in kingdom.
The discrimination toward women is such a strategy to maintain men’s domination. Thus, women are forced to see themselves as a weak creature that easily to be controlled.

To answer the third problem formulation, ideas of feminism is reflected in her struggle to save her nation. Although Esther at first just accepts her role of being passive and obedient, she grew up as an independent woman after facing the fact that her nation is in danger. She as a foreign woman, is possibly learnt to risk her life, and utilize her intellect, wisdom and maintain her beauty to save her power minority from extinction. Then her struggle can be formed in three main points. First, she as a woman proves that she can pursue the equality between her and Mordecai or King Ahasuerus. She shows that she can have right to voice herself up after her position of becoming a queen is equal to them. Second, she can free from men’s control of her body by showing that female’s attributes that she has is a new power to conquer in the men’s world. The thrid, she promotes women capability of taking over men’s power by doing an informal approach toward the king in order to participate in political life. Finally, the portrayal of Esther shapes expectation for future generations of Jewish women. Though at her time feminism not yet appeared, she provides the reflection of feminist ideas toward her struggle to save her nation.
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