

Chapter 2

Theories and Literature Review

2.1 Theories

2.1.1 Theory on Sexism

In the book *Feminist Theory: A Philosophical Anthology*, Ann E. Cudd and Leslie E. Jones (2005) defined sexism that it can refer to anything that creates, constitutes, promotes, sustains, or exploits an unjustifiable distinction between the sexes. Moreover, they stated that for feminism, sexism refers to a historically and globally pervasive form of oppression against women. The oppression and discrimination occur to women, for example many more women in the world lack access to education and many more are illiterate due to inequality in educational opportunity. Jobs that are high paying are much less likely to be held by women. Tedious and menial work is much more likely to be done by women. Women in the workforce are paid less than their male counterparts, are more often harassed and intimidated in work, and vulnerable to violence and abuse by men. Besides, they are more responsible for childbearing, childcare, and housework. Women in many nations of the world lack full formal equality under the law, and it is difficult for them to hold high government offices. These are some examples of sexism that mostly happen to women from all over the world, particularly in the patriarchal society.

Sexism has been embedded in the culture and society for a long time. It becomes the universal problem in restricting women's right and opportunity. However, women who call themselves 'feminist' realize this oppression and discrimination. They encourage many women to deny the discriminatory sex-role difference and have participation in economy, politics, and society. They call for women's right, liberation, and gender equality.

2.1.2 Theory on Feminism

M. Patricia Connelly et al. (2000) described the feminist theory: liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, radical feminism, and socialist feminism in the book *Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Development*.

2.1.2.1 Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism is rooted in the tradition of 16th- and 17th-century liberal philosophy, which focused on the ideals of equality and liberty. The liberal conception of equality was based on the belief that all men had the potential to be rational and that any inequality had to be justified in rational terms. However, liberal feminists see women's subordination as resulting from gendered norms, rather than from biological sex, and aim to change these norms. Liberal feminists focus on equal opportunities for women and men. Their concern is that women should receive equal opportunities in education and before the law has motivated worldwide campaigns for women's voting and property rights. These feminists are also concerned that job opportunities be equally open to women so that women achieve positions of power in government and business. Liberal-feminist activists are concerned with ensuring that laws and policies do not discriminate against women and that women have equal opportunities in all aspects of life.

2.1.2.2 Marxist Feminism

For Marxists, the subordination of women came into existence with the mode of production that introduced private property. Agriculture, the efficient and productive mode of production, made a few men get control of the productive resources and transformed them into private property. The social relations of production were that some men owned property and others did not. This was the first society with a class structure, and women were subordinated to guarantee that men who owned property would be able to pass it on to their biological offspring, thereby maintaining the class structure. Contemporary Marxist feminists continue this line of argument by inserting the capitalism, the current form of class society, perpetuates the subordination of women by enforcing their economic dependence on men. They argue that keeping women subordinate is functional to the capitalist system in a number of ways. Women give birth to new labor force and continue to do unpaid domestic labor. Women also form a reserve army of labor, that is, they provide a cheap and available labor force to compete for existing jobs, thereby creating downward pressure on wages. As homemakers and mothers, women support the process of profit-making, both as consumers of goods and services for the household

and as unpaid caregivers who subsidize and disguise the real costs of reproducing and maintaining the work force. Marxist feminists argue that because the subordination of women is maintained by the capitalist system, then that system should be the primary target of women's political activism. Women must organize with the male working class to abolish the capitalist system and establish a new mode of production, a socialist system. Only with socialism will classes disappear and the true basis of gender equality be established.

2.1.2.3 Radical Feminism

Radical feminism emerged in the 1960s in the United States in response to the sexism experienced by women working within the civil-rights and antiwar movements. Radical feminists believe that women's subordination does not depend on other forms of domination such as class. They argue that patriarchy, or the domination of women by men, is primary: it existed in virtually every known society, even those without classes. Women's subordination, as it is deeply embedded in individual psyches and social practices, is more difficult to change than class. Radical feminists are concerned with reproductive physiology and sexuality. They start from the view that humans are sexual beings and that sex makes a difference from the very beginning. They also argue that women's subordination is rooted in male control over women's fertility and sexuality, that is, over women's bodies. Repelling procreation, women will achieve equality and no longer be dependent on men.

2.1.2.4 Socialist Feminism

Socialist feminism emerged in the second half of the 1970s. Many feminists were dissatisfied with traditional Marxism, which saw women's subordination as secondary to class subordination. They also felt discomfort with the new radical feminism, which ignored class and saw patriarchy, or women's subordination, as the primary form of subordination. Socialist feminists argued that class and women's subordination were of equal importance and had to be challenged simultaneously. So, they redefined the radical-feminist conception of patriarchy so that it meant a set of hierarchical relations with a material base in men's control over women's sexuality, procreation, and labor power. They added a historical dimension to the concept of

patriarchy, arguing that it takes different forms in different historical periods and in different racial, cultural, political, economic, and religious contexts. They also argued that the Marxist definition of economic activity had to be expanded to include both productive and reproductive work. Socialist feminists insisted on the equal importance of the reproduction of children and the production of commodities. They were concerned with the relationship between reproduction and production and the capitalist male-dominated structure of both.

2.2 Literature Reviews

2.2.1 Changing Roles of Women from Past to Present

The change of women's roles seems to occur universally for different reasons. Eleanor Roosevelt (1944), wife of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, stated in her article "Woman's Place after the War" that "The main job of the average woman in our country still is to marry and have a home and children." This statement also indicates the traditional roles of American women in society at that time. The 1960's was the beginning of the period of the substantial social change in women's issue taking place in the United States. The beginning of the change was known as the women's movement influenced by the success of the civil rights movement for racial equality. At that time, there were many groups and organizations campaigning for equality among American women. The call was not only for a fundamental revision of American institutions, customs, and values, but also for a revolution in consciousness and minds of women as well as men, especially in the way women thought about themselves (The U.S. Information Agency, 1997). As a spokesperson of the contemporary female population, Gloria Steinem (1995) asserted that "What happens to men is called 'politics' and what happens to women is called 'culture'. We've taken one giant step forward by convincing the majority of the country that women can do what men can do."

In her article "The Status of French Women at Present," Dr. Amornsiri Sunsuratikul (1992) of Thammasat University described the changing roles of French women. She stated that in France, the word "Feminism," which is the movement for women's right, was accepted formally in French society in 1891 after the long opposition in the 18th century when the social management clung to the different

roles, duties, and education between men and women. In the same way, an Asian country such as China also faces the same experience. Another report of changing roles of women appears in the article “Woman and Children Care in China” of Ruth Sidel (1974). In this article, women were forced to marry at a young age and to take care of children and husband. However, their roles changed due to the economic development when women were needed for labor in the industrial factories. Still, they worked with inequality and received low wages until they demanded for equal opportunities and were given the right and equality in work.

2.2.2 Roles and Status of Thai Women

Boondoem Phairaoh (1975) described the traditional roles of Thai women since the Sukhothai and Ayutthaya periods. She stated that for the family role, daughters were under the power of parents. Daughters of general and high-class families were brought up to be good housewives. They were strictly educated by their own parents while daughters of lower class families could be sold legally into slavery by their parents. Moreover, in the Ayutthaya period, cousin marriage was practiced among high-class families which had affected the freedom of Thai women in choosing their own partners. Parents would choose the appropriate husbands for their daughters. After marriage, the role of wife was merely a housekeeper. The wife’s status was limited as husbands had all the authority over their wives. For the vocational field, since Sukhothai period, women of high-class were mostly lady-in-waiting in the palace while women of lower class helped their families in agriculture as unpaid family workers. In Ayutthaya period, women knew how to deal in small trade to support their families.

Furthermore, in the book *Women in Thai Literature* by the National Identity Board Office of the Prime Minister (1992), the traditional roles of Thai women are described through the female characters in Thai literatures of the three important periods - Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, and the first three reigns of the Rattanakosin period. From the study, it is found that the traditional women are portrayed as being inferior, obedient, and dutiful since they have to obey, respect, and be under power of their parents, relatives, and, particularly, husbands. They are dependent and passive as followers as if they cannot live by their own. This makes them lack of freedom and

identity. They have no opportunity to argue, express opinion, and even choose marriage partner. Furthermore, women have many responsibilities. In family, they work like slaves in serving parents and husbands, taking care of family members, doing housework, and so on. Additionally, for the role of wife, women are like the object or men's property. They are ruled while men are the rulers. They have to follow men's order and be loyal to men. They have to serve and take care of everything for their husbands. Thus, men are like the king or God while women are slaves or servants. They cannot behave badly or be over their husbands but they have to obey, respect, and make them pleased.

However, the changing roles of Thai women are mainly the result of the country's development. According to a study "Thai Women: Changing Status and Roles during the Course of Thai Modernization (III)" by Nitaya Onozawa (2001), Thai women's status and roles were influenced by the development of the country, particularly in the 1960's, due to the first six-year National Economic Development Plan and the assistance of the United States in economic, industrial, and military development in exchange for using Thai air bases for Vietnam War. As a result, women became the important forces of labor. In addition, in the article "Women and Economy," Sukhum Uttawawutichai (1992) of Thammasat University stated that the change of women's roles in Thai society was influenced by three major factors - agricultural, industrial, and educational development of the country. The agricultural development pushed women to work in the field as labors in the family to increase the rice production while the economic and industrial development due to Thailand's First National Development Plan in 1962 stimulated women to work as the industrial labors and to migrate to the big city for a job opportunity. In addition, the other essential factor is educational development. After the reorganization of Thailand's educational system in 1978, parents encouraged daughters to study because they thought that with higher education, daughters could obtain good jobs and salary. This view is supported by Busakorn Suriyasarn (1993) in her article "The Role and Status of Thai Women – Past to Present" in which she mentioned that education helped improve the status of women since it encouraged them to take an active role in the community. For example, in the revolution in 1932, Thai women were granted the right to vote along with men for the first time.

2.2.3 Literary Reflection

John Lye (1996), a professor of English Department, Brock University, stated in the article “On the Uses of Studying Literature” that literature explores the texture and meaning of human experience in a complex and compelling way, and leads us to insight and rich reflection, hence wisdom, concerning our lives and the nature of human experience. Moreover, literature represents and explores the way in which the world is viewed and experienced by people in that society or social group: that is, it tells us a great deal about how the world is actually understood by the society to which the artist belongs; it is understood not only intellectually but symbolically and emotionally. Therefore, literature is a very effective way of understanding a culture of a particular time, or of a particular class, or social or ethnic group. Thus, literature can help us understand how diverse times, cultures and classes are different, and how they are the same.

In the same way, Ruenruthai Sajaphan (1983) of Ramkhamhang University stated the value of literature that it provided both emotional and intellectual values because in the literary works, the authors intentionally and accidentally conveyed the useful lessons to the readers and made them realize and understand the human life and nature. Moreover, literature is like the mirror that can reflect the society in every period. The readers can apply the knowledge, lesson, and experience in the novel to their life or to solve their problems.

Tawat Poonnotok (1984) classified the types of novel into five categories:

(1) **Classicism** refers to the novel that follows the traditional way of life in the past. Events in the story are different from the reality. Mostly, supernature is used to solve the problem. The plot is adapted from the legends and historical stories or rewritten from the traditional literatures. Thus, setting and theme are usually in accordance with the past such as the novels *Ban Lang Chiang Rung*, *Dok Fa Jam Pa Sak*, and *Fak Fa Sa Ra Win* by Luang Vajitvatakarn.

(2) **Romanticism** refers to the novel that emphasizes emotion, sentiment, and intuition by having the aim to emotionally impress the readers without concerning about the intellectual values or advantages as philosophy, morality, and logic. The plot focuses on the way and outcome of emotion regarding love, greediness, anger, passion, jealousy, and so on. However, such novel has been popular among the

readers from past to present such as the novels *Dok Fa*, *Ban Sai Thong*, and *Dome Phu Jong Hong* by Ko Surangkanang and *Nam Yok Oak and Wanida* by Wannasiri.

(3) **Realism** refers to the novel that presents the social reality by having the plot adapted from the real life of people in the society. The novel realistically presents people's lives in general by having the characters with various characteristics, occupations, and social status. Its purpose is to express the different aspects of people's lives and social reality with both good and bad aspects such as the conflict and exploitation of people or the fair and unfair that really exist in the society, for example the novels *See Phan Din* by Krukrit Pramot, *Nee Lae Lok* by Dok Mai Sod, and *Ying Khon Chua* by Ko Surangkanang.

(4) **Naturalism** refers to the novel that presents the social reality as well as the realism but it tends to merely emphasize on the bad or weak nature of human emotion and the life with trouble, exploitation, oppression, adversity, suffering, pain, and so on. These are the negative aspects of society that tend to be overlooked, for example the novel *Kham Pi Pak Sa* by Chart Kobjitti.

(5) **Neo-realism** refers to the novel that presents the social reality which is developed from the realism. However, the point of view about social development and solutions are introduced in the novel alongside the social reality. The theme of social development is reflected in the novel, including idealism and faith. Thus, the idealism and reality are combined together by absolutely accepting the causes and effects of the ongoing things and also the happening, role, and triumph of the new things. However, the development depends on each society or place that has different social norm. Such novel presents the acceptance of things happening in the society that are taken to be the theme of the novel such as the novels *Pi Rab Dang* by Suwat Woradilok, *Muang Ne Ra Mit* by Nimitmongkol Nawarat, and *Kha Buan Karn Se Ree Jeen* by Sot Kulmarohit.

2.2.4 Previous Studies and Other Related Works

In the study entitled "An Analysis of the Status of Thai Women in the Novels of Krisana Asoksin in 1954 – 1987," Weerawan Srisamran (1990) analyzed the concepts of women's status in the novels of Krisana Asoksin. The result was that in the time after the revolution, Thai women had higher education. However, since 1954

the novels mainly portrayed the roles and status of women emphasizing on being the good housewife. While in Krisana Asoksin's novels during 1979 – 1987, she portrayed women with various characteristics and roles such as women who had educational, occupational, and social roles and status as well as men. These roles were influenced by the educational, economic, and social factors.

Thasanee Kumtharat (1991) analyzed the viewpoint on Thai women's roles in Seni Saowaphong's seven novels in the study entitled "An Analysis of Female Roles in Seni Saowaphong's Novels." The study covered women's roles in politics, education, economy, and socialization. The result was that for the political role, the author had presented the idea that women should pay more interest and participate in the political activities or have the right to express the ideas about politics. For the educational role, women should have the right and opportunity to obtain education as high as possible. Moreover, they should be more active in self-learning, particularly by reading. For the economic role, women should work to earn their living and for common good. For the role in socialization, besides family, women should involve in social activities. Particularly, they should participate in rural development.

In the study entitled "Realism in Botan's Novels," Kitiyawadee Kasemsan (1992) analyzed the realism in Botan's thirty-one novels written between 1966 - 1988. She divided the novels into three periods: from 1966 – 1967, 1968 – 1983, and 1984 – 1988. The findings of the study indicated that Botan's novels in the first period were mainly romantic with a slight combination of realism while in those of the second period, realism played a very dominant part with an emphasis on the influence of surroundings on the characters, especially in raising up children and family relationship. The author presented the struggle to lift up the standard of the under privilege people and the fight against oppression of all kinds. In the third period, the novels obviously step into naturalism where worsening social conditions were portrayed.

Thitaya Phoyu (1993) analyzed women's roles as portrayed in Duangjai's seven novels in the study entitled "An Analysis of Female Roles in Duangjai's Novels." The study covered female roles concerning family, education, economy, politics, and society. Thitaya Phoyu believed that for the family role, Thai women

should maintain some traditional duties as mother, wife, daughter, and grandmother in taking care of the family members. For the educational role, women should have an opportunity to obtain education as high as possible. For economy, they had working capability as well as men. For political and social roles, they should have an opportunity to express their opinions and to participate in political activities as a part of the society. They also should have freedom in associating with men.

In her study entitled “An Analysis of Women’s Roles in Botan’s Novels,” Arunthadee Intaralawal (1996) examined the concepts of women’s role as portrayed in Botan’s seven novels. The study covered women’s roles in family, education, economy, socialization, politics, law, tradition and culture. For the family role of women, the author believed that women should express their ideas regarding family, especially when they play the roles of mother, wife or daughter. For the educational role, women should have an opportunity to obtain education in accordance with their ability and interest. Moreover, they should be more active in acquiring new knowledge and education at a higher level. For the economic role, women should engage in occupations in order to earn their living and support their family. For the role in socialization and politics, women should have freedom in associating with men. Moreover, women should claim for the rights and benefits that they deserve legally. Finally, for the traditional and cultural roles, women should spend their lives in accordance with the tradition and culture in their society.

Nuchawadee Meekhum (1996) examined the concepts on women’s roles as portrayed in Praphatson Sevikul’s fifteen novels in the study entitled “An Analysis of Women’s Roles in Praphatsorn Sevikul’s Novels.” The study covered women’s roles in education, economy, politics, society, and marriage. The study revealed that the author supported the idea that women should have the same education as men. Moreover, women should be active in acquiring new knowledge. For the economic role, the author emphasized that women should work to earn their living and support their family. For the political role, women had lower status than men. For the role in family, Thai women still followed the men’s idea. For social activities, women should be socially active rather than staying at home. Lastly, for women’s idea on marriage, the author believed that women should be independent to choose their lifestyles.

In the article “Women’s Issues” in *International Issues in Thai Context*, Somporn Varnado (1997) of Chiang Mai University analyzed the gender problem and the invisibility of women in Thai society. The analysis covered sexism, which is gender discrimination, and also the status, roles, and participation of Thai women in economy and politics. It was found that women are the majority of labor force with very low income in economic sector. Moreover, women participate less in politics and decision making at the national level. However, she found that the roles of Thai women in the modern society have changed from the past due to education and economic participation. Thai women can obtain higher education and have an opportunity to get a better job. She also analyzed the image of modern Thai women through the leading female characters of three novels: *The Woman Named Boonrawd* (*Phuying Khon Naan Chue Boonrawd*) by Botan, *The Hooded Snake* (*Mae Bia*) by Vanit Churungkitanan, and *The Woman Minister* (*Rattamontri Ying*) by Duangchai. The result was that the image of modern Thai women portrayed in these novels was women were brave, strong, and independent. These three characters tried to deny the traditional values about gender roles and discrimination, and they tried hard to fight against all prejudices and could achieve their goals finally.

In the chapter “The Change in the Role of Women in Contemporary Thai Literature” in *Modern Thai Literature: The Process of Modernization and the Transformation of Values*, Mattani (1988) described that after the revolution in 1932, which is called ‘the post-revolution period’, women novelists and some liberal-minded male novelists increasingly supported the social equality and freedom for Thai women by portraying liberated women as being different from the framework of tradition. Many Thai novels reflected the changing roles of women by setting a contrast to the characters who represent traditional women. For example, the female character in *The Accident* (*Ubattihet*) (1934) by Dok Mai Sod in which a new generation of independent women in modern society after the revolution was represented by Sunthari, a well-educated woman from western country who was confident to communicate freely with intellectual men. Her independent thinking and practical reasons in choosing her husband represented the freedom of modern Thai women in leading their own lives. Rachanee in *Ghostss* (*Pisat*) (1953) by Seni Saowaphong represented a university graduate who objected to the traditional values

and society and her aristocratic family. She chose to live a free life with a revolutionary young man of a common social background and devoted her life to rural development. Besides, Mattani also mentioned other works that related to the women's roles and status in the society. These works covered the gender problem and inequality in society and also the attempt to solve or fight against the gender discrimination and prejudice.

Weerawat Intaraporn (1998) analyzed the leading female characters in Botan's twenty novels in her study entitled "A Study of Feminism in Botan's Novels." The study covered the characteristics of female characters, the attitude of Botan towards women, the feminist concept conveyed in the novels, and the role of Botan's novels in supporting feminism. It was found that Botan's attitude towards women was presented through female characters in which they were sexually oppressed and had to struggle for life. In this way, Botan urged for the value awareness for women. Furthermore, Botan's novels played an important role in supporting feminism in three aspects: to reflect the social problem about feminism in Thai society, to change the negative social value towards women, and to suggest the solutions of the problem.