

# THE STRUGGLE OF A LESBIAN IN THE NOVEL GARIS TEPI SEORANG LESBIAN(GTSL) BY HERLINATIENS

*by* Kasnadi Kasnadi

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**THE STRUGGLE OF A LESBIAN IN THE NOVEL *GARIS TEPI SEORANG  
LESBIAN(GTSL)* BY HERLINATIENS**

**KASNADI**

Lecturer, School of Education (STKIP), Ponorogo, Indonesia

**ABSTRACT**

The lesbian exists around us with the negative stigma. This paper investigate the representation of the struggle of the lesbian among the patriarchal community in Indonesia as it is represented in the novel *Garis Tepi Seorang Lesbian (GTSL)*. The main theory used in this article is Gettys proposed by Ahdiati. This article finds out that Paria is the representation of the lesbian in the novel. She struggles for the sake of keeping her identity as the lesbian. The struggles involves four stages. The end purpose of this struggle is Paria keeps her identity as the lesbian by divorcing with her husband, leaving her family, and leaving as the lesbian. She does the action by the purpose to release and give freedom to her community, the lesbian and to get justice among the patriarchal culture.

**KEYWORDS:** Lesbian, Struggle, Oppression, Justice

**INTRODUCTION**

The lesbian people exist around us with their negative image awarded to them. They are viewed negatively because they have the sexual tendency and interest which are different from the people in general. Therefore, they are labelled as the unique community with having deviant sex orientation compared to the people at large. This difference causes their existence exiled from the people's interaction.

The term "lesbian" is a part of homosex terminology. The homosex refers to the concept of having a tendency of love at the same sex. When the sex orientation occurs to loving at the same sex, such as a male loves a male is called "gay" and the female loves the female is named "lesbian". According to Tyson(1999) that the lesbian is the female who has the sexual orientation is directed to other female. This tendency of the sexual orientation elicits the assumption that the lesbian is called upnormal people who deviate from the people generally. Because they are called as the upnormal people, they create a particular community, the lesbian.

The lesbian community which is called "the continuum of lesbian" releases a thought and a concept to carry out an action. This is aimed at struggling and defending the lesbian existence. This action is conducted because there is a patriarchal culture which oppresses the lesbian community continuously. To release this oppression, the lesbian forms a pattern of movement. Gettys as quoted by Ahdiati (2007), classifies the movement pattern into four classifications: *preliminary stage*, *popular stage*, *formal stage*, dan *institutional stage*. The preliminary stage occurred in the United States in the 1950s. This stage is identified by the critical identity and discrimination awarded to the homosexual community, including the lesbian. This situation resulted in the *gay liberation movement* (IBID : 30). The popular stage occurred in 1960s in which it was seen from the beginning of the showing of the lesbian identity. It was marked by the careness of the lesbian community toward the feminist group. In 1970s, the resurrection of the lesbian organization that showed its

movement's objective. It aimed at describing the purpose of the lesbian was released publicly to the people using mass media. This stage was called the formal stage. In running this stage, the lesbian struggled their existence among the people at large. This stage lead to the institutional stage. This discored that the lesbian community changed their struggle pattern from the social separatist movement into political movement. This change identified that the lesbian can takes part and take role in the political world. With this movement, the lesbian can reduce and decrease the supremacy of the male group over the female group. This movement was called the *women's liberation*.

Within the struggle, there must be an object which is struggled (*weltanschauung*). The lesbian struggle wants to show its existence. It is released with the freedom from the paternalistic movement. The freedom which was gotten such as identity, sexual orientation, and human right. All of them get the admittance from the society that the lesbian is a normal community as it is. In their struggle, the lesbian has internal conflict with their family members, religious people, academicians, and community at large. They try hard to stop the development and progression of the lesbian in the community. They think that the lesbian is taboo and deteriorate the destiny. Even, more extremely, the religious people claim that the lesbian is taboo, sinful, immoral, and the center of the contagious disease.

*I am a women who want to think wiser to other people. I'm still trying to provide an opportunity for others to think well. And we are existing in the world because because we were created to exist. That we are existing not to be oppressed by all the evil and injustice (GTSL p.88, 2003).*

Based on the above data, Paria feels his pride has been trampled. He struggles the sense of her humanity. As is stated by Herlinatiens in an interview with the author that she wants to be received by the community not due to her gender, but because she is as human beings. According to Herlinatiens the women, including the lesbians, are also human beings that should be respected and appreciated by the society. The humanity will be more important than just sex, gender, sexual orientation, color, position, social status. The humanity is not concerned with the identity but of humanity. Paria championed humanity is basically the form of struggle against the injustice. As humanity thinking presented by Pramodya in Human Earth tetralogy. The problem of humanity is derived from the assumption that man live his life as a human being is intrinsically to break away from all the shackles, for example, the rejection of conservative cultural heritage, resistance against the injustice of colonial rule, or the spirit of building freedom and human welfare within the scope of national unity (Hun et al., 2011).

The acceptance which is not commensurate with Paria's expectation makes her stronger to struggle her existence as the lesbian. She is not easily underestimated. She just does not want to be underestimated. She proclaimed herself as the one who would not be defeated. She was determined unanimously in order to breathe air of freedom. The radical lesbian group launched a concept that the lesbians do not need men. The struggle requires firmness. The struggle needs a principle. Paria is a staunch fighter in realizing the principle, as illustrated in this data. " I became a man upright in confidence, unbroken and undefeated " (GTSL p.73, 2003).

Paria is also struggling to be accepted in her family. Her family is a barrier for her that must be able to be avoided. The thinking for the family should taken a solution to avoid dishormany. She deeply thinks for keeping the harmony in her family. She has to find reasons that can be accepted by her family. The demand of her family to get married with a man should be rejected wisely and in a subtle way.

*I became increasingly agitated. I am constantly thinking how to deal with my family later. Should I give them more*

*false promises about a wedding which I have to represent to them? While never crossed my mind to marry a man. I'm a woman whose in the eyes of people do not have a last name, but in fact I have been the Lady of Paria Ashmora Ashvagosha. So, what's more? (GTSL p.130, 2003).*

Paria still reject the principle of her parents. She thought and worked hard to assure people that can understand the concept of multicultural society. Based on the principle of the multiculturalism, the lesbian feminists continue to move on to show their identity. Their struggle is more dynamic and bold. The reaction of her family and community is giving positive meaning of her struggle. At least the people will consider that the lesbian feminists do exist and live with them.

The principle of multiculturalism requires that all forms of discrimination should not happen in the community. The lesbian feminists who have different ways in dealing with life, mainly in sexuality is not the main issue to worry about. If starting from the concept of multiculturalism, the exclusion of the lesbian feminists need not happen. They are figures that also need to be valued and respected. The rights of individuals and different communities must be respected. The concept of multiculturalism culture will oppose all homogeneity forms. The multiculturalism assumes that society is a form of association of differences Ahdiati, 2007).

The struggle of Paria is clearer and more certain. It was seen from her attitude and conception which she has chosen. She is brave to struggle for the sake of love with the same woman which is seen untrue in her community. Her choice can be seen in the following quotations:

*My attitude changed into far rude to him. I'm getting sick and confused every day. Fear for can't stop all that has been almost accomplished. I was too scared not to reach a meaning of loyalty in a this controversial love. A lesbian love! (GTSL p.272, 2003).*

*"Stop bastard! I need to talk, do not run away from me, "and I am chasing him. I pulled his arm and he remained watching her. The stunned overflow my feeling. "Sorry Mahendra, but we should and must talk to stop all this before its too late "(GTSL p.278, 2003).*

Paria is the figure of an active lesbian. She, though in love with Shiva Rie Ashvagosha role as women, is an aggressive figure. In life, she has strong principles. She is the one who never give up in fighting for her beliefs.

*I am the woman who will not be nervous because the waves slammed my way. I am a woman who is born of in toxicity which grows in the natural whip, perched on the biases wind of a reel for a long time. I am a woman who is not dazzled by the circumstances, yes. That's all (GTSL p.123, 2003).*

The recognition of herself as the lesbian figure is no longer uncovered. She voices his heart openly. She does not hesitate to admit her identity as the lesbian. According to her, the

lesbian is not a weak man, who is needs to be helped and accompanied by a man.

*" I am a lesbian. But I am still the human right? I became increasingly dizzy because people assume that my behavior as the lesbian is like an animal" (GTSL p.129, 2003).*

## THE PATTERN OF STRUGGLE

The patterns of the struggle of Paria are consist in two ways. The first is by applying hidden way or in stealthy

manner. The second is by an open way. The hidden way is done on the premise that society is not ready to accept her presence as the lesbian. So, she does not dare to open up both within the family and in society at large. The following is presented the hidden ways of Paria in applying her identity as the lesbian.

*"Yes", in the family session, I said flatly, "I'm still not ready. I still need a higher college again. About the husband's case, I certainly find it later. So do not force me to get married with Mr. Wiryo". The biggest scam that is being planned in my brain (GTSL p.82, 2003).*

Paria knows well that her family do not like her to be the lesbian. Therefore, when she wants to be engaged with a man by her parents, she pretends to be not ready. Continuing her study to the college becomes her reason. In this way, her family agrees and receives Paria. The reason to go to college is actually a made-up reason to avoid from the marriage. In fact the reason it's just a lie, so that families are not forced to get married.

Paria lack of openness on her identity as the lesbian as it is seen from her appearance when he will be married to Mahendra. To cover this, Paria accepts to be married by Mahendra. The issue of lesbian on has been wafted by Mahendra family. To fool the issue, she acts generously with Mahendra and his family. With the kindness, Mahendra gives an explanation to his mother that she is not a lesbian. She tries to avoid her identity to the public as it is stated in the following quotation.

*"Seeing my attitude is always good and respectful in the presence of Mahendra 's mother and her entire family, even Mahendra's mother is more convinced that I am not the lesbian and I will be her prospective in-law" (GTSL p.249, 2003).*

In this way, she could hide her lesbian and throws away the gossip that she is the lesbian as it has been as rumored by the society. Among the society, the lesbian sexuality is still a taboo. Therefore, they still confine themselves within their own communities. They did not dare to come out and express their sexuality identity openly. In his book, Epistemology of the Closet, Sedgwick expressed the term "out of the closet"(Barry, 2010). That is, the lesbians are not dared openly coming out to declare their lesbian identity.

What is done by Paria is a form of struggle to maintain her identity. Paria's struggle as stated by Ahdiati (2007) equals with Lesbian Feminist Movement in the early 50s in America in which the lesbian feminist movement tended to be individuals with a hidden way. The lesbian movement becomes more solid when it joined the "Civil Rights Movement" and "The New Lefs" (Ahdiati, 2007). If its seen from its role, the lesbians thinking results in new movement, either individually or in groups. However, if it is viewed from a social movement result in separatist and practical political movements, the movements are conducted covertly openly (Ahdiati, 2007).

Paria continues struggling to demonstrate her identity, the lesbian throughout secretly and openly. As an example is she establishes many contacts with the lesbian communities, like in Yogyakarta. The community continues to contact different community in different places. They become the center of discussion to solve the problems that they have faced so far, such as the way to make people accept their identity. Even, from the discussion results in policy how to establish ideas on the lesbians among the Indonesian people.

As the lesbian, Paria experiences continuous emphasis from her family. As the consequence, she tells the truth about her identity to them. This makes her family are shocking and as the result, her relationship between herself with her

family mainly her mother is not in harmony. She states "My mother is getting away from me. I even do not hesitate to tell her that I am a woman who loves the same woman (GTSL p.80, 2003)". She also wants to show her identity to the society around her publicly.

*Gita, you know about me and my obsessions? About my madness, how can I make our society accepts my presence? We exist with different tendency of sex, but it is very difficult for them to accept this difference. I am very confused now, but I never step down (GTSL p.29, 2003).*

At first the struggle of Paria gets various obstacles from many sides, such as the family, intellectuals, and the general public. However, she struggles in indirect way or hidden way then followed by the open way. Through the open way, the negative challenges from many elements of society are directed to her. What has Paria done in exploring her identity is in line with the lesbian movement in America in the 1960s in which it was marked by separatist movements and since the 1990s the movements change to the openway through the institutionalization. However, the real acceptance of the people in the United States has not been encouraging. In Indonesia until now, the rights of gay, lesbian, or transgender are unrecognized and they are still underestimated (Oetomo, 2003).

#### THE CONFLICTS FACED BY PARIA AND THEIR SOLUTIONS

Paria faces some problems in expressing her identity as the lesbian. The main problem is the cultural bound existing in Indonesia in which it just admits that there are two sex differences, male and female. The male has to love the female and otherwise. There is not crossing line that permitting the male loves the same sex, male and the female love the same female. Such the cultural inscription makes Paria tries hard to be accepted by the people around her that she may differs with others in term of expressing love to the same woman. However, she goes on with her identity by penetrating the cultural hindrance in front of her. She faces the problems in her family as well as in her society. Her family challenges her openly. She states:

*"My mom gets angry with me. My uncle does too. He asks me why I have done the lesbian in which it makes my mother sad and angry with me. My condition causes sadness in my family (GTSL p. 83, 2003).*

The society who live around her also challenge her choice as the lesbian. They crush her directly by burning her books of the lesbians. They claims what has Paria done is not suitable with the religion and the religion orders the people to exile Paria. To express their dissatisfaction to Paria, they throw the cow dirt to her home (GTSL p.112, 2003). Seeing this evidences, she continues to fight overt by ignoring their oppressions. She goes on with her identity. She believes that God creates her with different tendency of having love and sex with the same gender. She exists because she is existed by God. She does not care to the rejection of people. She intensifies her activity to establish her existence.

*Paria tries to give understanding to the people about her identity using many ways, such as throughout her books, speeches, and direct discussions. And in a very heroic moment, the people come to her and throw a stone to her so that she is evacuated from the stone accident to her house (GTSL p.112, 2003).*

With some enlightments on the lesbians, the people eventually do not care with her identity. They do not protest to her. They start accepting her although with many notes. Other effort to avoid the clash with other people is her movement to France. She chooses France because it gives freedom to her people. France is the symbol of freedom to its people. In contrast, Indonesia is not an appropriate place for the lesbians, but the France is the right place to her.

She states that “ I am home, I am home for the sake of love in which I really appreciate the most (GTSL p.308, 2003).

### THE PURPOSE OF PARIA’S STRUGGLE

Paria brings out the spirit of the 2000s era. Therefore, she worked hard to struggle her existence as the lesbian. The aim of her struggle is to achieve justice and uphold the truth. She demands justice for human rights as it is appropriate for mutual respect. She is enforcing the essential truth, the truth of the law of the Almighty God. She wishes and demands justice and uphold the truth of human values is fair from the point of view of a heterosexual. Paria expresses some sarcastic words to show her aggravation to the people in her society because they think that they are better than her. In connection with the rights issue, Paria has own view of life. Her philosophy is based on the philosophical expression of the feminist lesbian. According to Hun (2011), the struggle can be realized through the resistance against the existing values, reaction to the challenge, or awareness against injustice. What she has done so far represent this statement above. The resistance of thought and lesbian movement which she has conducted against the people is actually a form of opposition against the patriarchal and heterosexual values. In addition, the lesbian movements also raise awareness of their people to fight the injustice which is inflicted on them.

Paria’s struggle inspired by the concept of the existentialism philosophy. The concept reveals that the lesbians are used to fight for their existence in the society in which they feel that their community is less freedom. The philosophers of existentialism, Kierkegaard views the existentialism is the manifestation of a human being in this world. The existence of human being can be seen from something that was planned, done, and eventually existed. Paria as the representation of the lesbian shows that she is not static but dynamic. By simply doing the plan, struggle, and ultimately became the lesbian woman can be recognized by the community. Paria form of an ideological struggle in which it is dismantling oppression and searching the root of oppression until having the real liberation efforts. The patriarchal oppression against lesbians is the form of the systemic oppression. The repression is reflected in Paria’s statement below:

*I am woman in the margin line, who wants to strengthen the thinking of being more civilian. Although it is difficult, I’m still trying to provide chance for others to think well, that we are existing around them. And we exist because we are created to exist. We are existing not to be oppressed by many kinds of badness and injustice (GTSL p.88, 2003).*

The character of Paria plays very important role as the true woman. It’s seen from her bravery in challenging the patriarchal culture. The struggle of her is seen from her choice in divorce with her husband, leaving her family, and choosing to live with her own identity as the lesbian. She chooses this way although she has the effect of being extremely suffered. In achieving her dream, she is brave to face the oppression mainly the matter of gender. She is able to elevate the dignity of women like the man and even she exceeds that thing by having the man become the unneeded person. She does not like the man in her life. She represents herself as the independent women without being dependent on the man. In every aspect of her life, she does not need the man.

The struggle of Paria is the manifestation of metaphysical rebellion consisting of inner and outer rebellion. According to Hun and Camus (2011), the rebellion in literary work is generally divided into inner and outer rebellion. The inner rebellion is close to the metaphysical rebellion and the outer rebellion refers to historical rebellion. The metaphysical rebellion covers the insight view and the causal of the loss is for the sake of justice. The historical

rebellion covers the social rebellion in which its seen from the movements to send out their enemy or opponent. Paria struggles her identity not for the sake of herself, but it is used for sustaining her identity and her groups. She struggles not only to face the patriarchal and heterosexual domination, but also for having the essence of humanity. She struggles for her groups to get the peace among the various people in the community. She thinks that her group should be admitted and accepted by other people who have different view of gender.

## CONCLUSIONS

The aspect which is struggled by paria is the humanity. She struggles her identity silently and open. In attaining her struggle, she gets hindrance from her family and people in massive. She solves the hindrance by making public speeches, discussions and writing articles. She struggles for the sake of humanity. She struggles not for herself but also for her community and group, the lesbian. She tries to show that the woman equals with the man with destroying the patriarchal and heterosexual system and demanding the justice and establishing the truth.

What Paria has done is the representation of the women's liberation. It is seen from the rebellion to the structure of women existence among the patriarchal domination. The women are seen as the weak people and need the protection from the men. But, she rejects this view by divorcing with her husband, leaving her family and living under her belief of the lesbian. Thus, Paria fighting not for himself but for his people. She aligns its existence to the presence of men, against male dominance, patriarchal systems break down and the other, not because they want to uphold justice and truth.

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#### AUTHOR DETAILS



**Dr. Kasnadi, M.Pd.** is a lecturer at School of Education (STKIP) Ponorogo East Java. He got heer doctor degree from State University of Surabaya in 2013. He teacher Indonesian literature in his institution. His interest is in literature. He also wote some articles in KOMPAS and JAWA Post newspapers.

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