CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Conflict

In literary works, conflict is one of the vital aspects that is not only necessary but it is inevitable, hence, it is almost unimaginable if a literary work without a conflict. According to Roberts and Jacob (1989:99) conflict is the most significant element, the essence of plot. In other words, a conflict is the most important part in a story, it makes a story enjoyable to be read. In conflict, there might be one or two persons even more, they may fight, argue, or otherwise carry on their opposition.

2.1.1. Definition of conflict

In a story there is always a conflict to make the story more interesting to be read. According to Kirsner and Mandell, “conflict is the struggle between opposing forces that emerges as the action develops. This conflict can be clash between protagonist, a story’s principal character, and an antagonist, someone or something presented in opposition to the protagonist. Sometimes the antagonist is a villain; more often, he or she simply represents a conflicting point of view or advocates a course of action different from the one the protagonist follows. Sometimes the antagonist is not a character at all but a situation (for instance, war or poverty) or an event (a natural disaster, such as a flood or a storm, for example) that challenges the protagonist. In other stories, the protagonist may struggle against a supernatural force, or the conflict may occur within a character’s mind.” It may be a struggle between two moral choices, such as whether to stay at home and care for an aging
parent or to leave and make a new life. As Likumahuwa said, someone who has two choices in his/her life which are hard to decide also can be presented as a conflict or dilemma. Hence, the conflict may occur not necessarily as direct opposition, but rather as contrasting ideas or values (2001:79).

2.1.2. Types of conflict

Literally, a conflict may variously be physical, moral, psychological, intellectual, or spiritual contest between antagonistic forces. According to Koesnosoebroto (1988:43) there are two types of conflict, internal and external conflict.

a. Internal conflict is a conflict between aspects of the personality. It calls man against himself, which the character may also have a conflict in his/her mind. This conflict occurs when he or she is confronted against some elements in his or her own nature, like ego or pride.

b. The external conflict is a conflict between a person and an external force (another person, society, environment, nature, the universe, God). The main character may be pitted against some other persons or group of persons, this is called a conflict of man against man, he may also be confronted against some external forces; physical nature, society, or ‘fate’, this is called a man against environment. Also, a conflict of man against nature, can be a conflict of character againsts the forces outside himself as nature, God, or fate and it is also called the conflict of man against environment.

Yet, Likumahuwa (2001:82) also specifically defines that there are three kinds of conflicts: Inner/psychological/emotional conflict that known as internal conflict, social conflict and elemental conflict are known as external conflict.
a. Inner/Psychological/Emotional conflict, this conflict refers to the conflict that a person has within himself or herself because the person has two choices which are hard to decide or to choose because both are important. However, it is impossible to choose both of them at once. Then, the conflict happens. It is also caused by a tough stimulus that comes from outside and it will make someone depression, frustration, overcoming trauma and psychological problems, such as inner confusion and moral dilemmas. Sometimes, we have to deal with some of conflicts that occur on ourself or mind. Those conflicts could make us depressed or frustrated because we have to decide between two choices or more that hard to choose.

b. External conflict, this conflict happens when character has different opinion or argument with other character or group of people which they have contrary desires that can not be fulfilled. There are two kinds of external conflict:

1. Social conflict (man against man), this conflict may happen between character and outside force. The character in a story will struggle against the circumstances, however, the outside force might come from another character or the environment or nature. Social conflict is a problem among humans. It occurs because there is disagreement in opinions, thought, needs, point of view, or goals that can stimulate a social conflict (Likmahuwa 2001:82). For example, there is a disagreement between a husband and wife how their money should be spent. A husband wants to buy some stuff but his wife gets angry because the price is out of their expectation. Then, the conflict occurs because both of them have different opinion. Besides, social conflicts have many shapes. It might be a contradiction between two people or more and include conflict between a character with
traditions of their culture and government. Moreover, it happens when the someone againsts the tradition values of his or her society.

2. Elemental conflict (man against nature), this conflict occurs between man and nature or environment. Likumahuwa states that environment also has a huge meaning and covering some of the certain culture values, struggle to change the culture or habit sometime brings conflict. He also said that sometimes elemental conflict can take place when humans are mistreating the nature, which then it turns and mistreats human back. When a character must overcome some natural obstacles or condition, a conflict occurs. Natural disaster can obscure human efforts, which then bring tragedy to human life. For example, vulcanic eruption, flood, earthquake, storm.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that Likumahuwa’s theory and Koesnosoebroto’s theory has the same definition and meaning about conflict. Internal conflict is inner or psychological or emotional conflict whether external conflict is social or elemental conflict. First, based on Koesnosoebroto’s theory about internal conflict is a conflict that occurs within someone mind or personality, it is called Man against himself while Likumahuwa also said that inner conflict is a conflict that happen within himself or herself, which someone who has two choices that really hard to decide. Then, the writer can say that internal or inner conflict is a conflict that happen when someone has two choices or more but he or she confuse which one that should be chosen, which Likumahuwa said, it is called dilemma. Second, the external conflict is social conflict and elemental conflict. Koesnosoebroto said that the social conflict is a conflict that the main character may be pitted against some other person or group of persons, this is called Man against man. Likumahuwa
said that the social conflict is a conflict that may happen between character and outside forces. So, social conflict occurs when someone has a conflict with others because they have different goal, thought, point of view, belief or opinion. Besides, the elemental conflict is a conflict between man and nature or environment, said Koesnosoebroto. While Likumahuwa also said the elemental conflict is a conflict between man and nature.

Then, from those kinds of conflicts the writer will use the external conflict to figure out Mulan’s conflicts in struggle to get the equality with men, which are conflict between man against man and man against other forces or society.

2.2. Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism aims to achieve equal legal, political, and social rights for women (Humm 1992:181). This movement appeared because there were so many contradictions about men and women’s rights in the society, which women were oppressed by men. This problem exists because of the way in which men and women are socialized which keeps men in the power positions. However, liberal feminists believe that men and women are created equal by God and they should treat equal. As Gillian (1982) declared that, “all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these life, liberty, and the pursuit happiness”. From this statement it shows that men and women were born equal. There is not one is positive and other negative, not one is powerful and other is powerless, not one is worth and other is unworth. They are equal. Betty Frieden (Humm 1992:182) says the goal of this theory is the equality for women in socio political system. Women should have the right to choose, not have their life chosen for them because of their sex or the tradition take control for them that put women under men power.
The idea of women liberation shows “an individual freedom for women from the confines of tradition roles, which the society, men are considered to be independent, aggressive, competitive, rational, and physically strong, while women are thought to be passive, nurturant, cooperative, emotional, and physically weak (Kourany, Sterba, Tong 1992:2)” but despite of that, a philosopher John Stuart Mill argues that no reflective student of human history can assert that all men are stronger and smarter than all women. He believes that women are in fact men’s equal, he concedes that there might be some biological sex differences between males and females but it does not mean there are any intellectual and/or moral differences between men and women (Kourany, Sterba, Tong 1993:16). Alison Jagger convinces that the single most important goal of women’s liberation is equality of opportunity (Humm 1992:181). Women should have the same opportunity like men. Opportunity to speak in a public, in a family, making decision, to vote, opportunity to get high education, and the most important thing is to become themselves. Humm says that the belief of liberal feminism is about freedom for every women (1992:407), women should a freedom to decide for themselves.

Wollstonecraft said that women should have the same civil liberties (Humm 1992:181). The liberation should be give to women because every human being deserves to choose what they want to become. The value of this movement tries to invite women to struggle for their real rights in their society and make people realize that women have a good potential to do something even it was considered uncommon to be done by them. It also tries to see the innerself of women and their capability. How they perceive their lives and how they actualize themselves as human beings, remarks of Miss Margery Fry claims that “Women do their best work when they are allowed to do it, not as women, but as human beings” (Humm 1992:40). If women are given the opportunity to do what should they do,
they will do efficiently and effectively because as a human women also have the capability to do what men do.

Then, the focus of liberal feminist movement is the struggle to get the equal rights between women and men. The point of their thinking is that women are equal to men, so women should have rights like men had.

2.3 Women in Chinese society

Historically, China was a country that used patriarchal system that men were the center of authority. The centuries old doctrined of the Yin and Yang made for the higher status in the society was men. The Yang, associated with good fortune and all that was desirable identified with the male, and the Yin, the element of darkness and evil was identified female (Latourette 1962:574). Then, women were regarded as much less valuable than men, people saying in common circulation appraised men as infinitely preferable to women which men were considered as a strong human that had power and capable to do anything. Moreover, in their ancestor belief men is the highest virtues and greatest gift because they can carry on the family line.

According to their traditions, the only one thing that women can bring honor for their family was getting married because marriage was of major importance in carrying on the family line and in maintaining honors to ancestors. A marriage could not be contracted between persons of the same surname, even though no blood relationship exist. The arrangement of marriages for which good deal can no doubt be said when the wise matchmaker were used, which symbolized more clearly than anything else the individual’s subordination to his family. Through a marriage the bride became a member of her husband’s
family which she was taken to her husband’s home for the ceremony, then, the bride must obeyed all the family members which to please them with serving (Latourette 1962:569). Also, The manner of women were really important, they must act calmly, politely, kind, and obidient, if they do not they would dishonored and disgraced. Essentially that a woman’s place is in the home to become a housekeeper; to please her husband, cook, take care of children. They do not allowed to do things that outside of the house, its only men can do like go to war, get the education, or speak in a public if they break the rules or traditions, killed is the consequences (Peck 1985:24).