CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The novel takes place in puritan era. Puritan era begins in 16th century. Puritan has a strong faith to their God. Therefore, in many rules, they usually attach the rule to the belief of their religion. In Puritan, a church is not only a place of worship but also as the center of government. In addition to conduct spiritual activities, the implementation of the trial was conducted in the church. The highest authority belongs to a Pastor because Pastor considered as the holiest and merciful person in the world and surely sinless. However, the authority owned by men raises the oppression to the women. Therefore, there are many cases which show the oppression to the women because of the patriarchal system in puritan as reflected in the Scarlet Letter.

In the Scarlet Letter, many puritan women get an oppression which makes them do not get the same right as men. Puritan women in the novel have no right to give the opinion. It can be seen in the event when Hester is judged in a trial. In the trial of Hester Prynne, there are a group of women who are arguing about Hester's punishment before the trial begins. As seen below:

> "This woman has brought shame upon us all, and ought to die. Is there not law for it? Truly there is, both in the scripture and the statue-book. Then let the magistrates, who have made it of no effect, thank themselves if their own wives and daughters go astray!"
> "Mercy on us, goodwife," exclaimed a man in the crowd, "Is there no virtue in woman, save what springs from wholesome fear of the gallows?" (TSL:44)

The data above shows a woman who is arguing about Hester's punishment is stopped by a man because it is inappropriate for women to give an opinion in public. The man in the data above mentions the gallows to emphasize that the women will get the punishment if they keep on talking. The data above also show the oppression which is given by the women to Hester. The belief influences them to how they think about the punishment. It can be seen in their statement which oppress the other woman.

As human being, women should be free to give an opinion since they have the same ability to think as men. However, based on the data, the women there have no right to give an opinion. Men take full authority to decide that women there cannot give the opinion. As the church member, when puritan women are in public area they have to be a listener only. Although women have a good reputation, they are not allowed to be the judges of malefactor. As seen in the following data:

> "Goodwives," said a hard-featured dame of fifty, "I'll tell ye piece of my mind. It would be greatly for the public behoof, if we women, being of mature age and church members in good repute, should have the handling of such malefactresses as this Hester Prynne." (TSL: 43)

This data shows one of the old women who also gather in the trial believes that women are actually capable of handling such cases, but the law does not allow it. Thus as the church member they really have to keep their words and attitude. It is clearly shows the patriarchal system in puritan. Patriarchal system in puritan gives an authority for men to make a decision to solve the problem. It shows the patriarchal system limits the right of women to express their own thought. It so

unfair when the women who are actually having the same ability to give an opinion as men do not get an opportunity in expressing their mind.

The thought that women have no right to give an opinion cannot be separated with the belief of puritan. The belief does influence their thought about women. As pointed out by Kate Millett in anthropological aspect, myth and religion affect the way women are thought and treated.

In puritan, women are seen as the sinful creature. It is influenced by the story of Adam and Eve in puritan belief. It is told that Adam is persuaded by Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. It makes God so angry and then throws them away to the earth. Puritan believes in this myth that woman is the source of sin. Thus, they should be forbidden to take a big role such as become the one who conducts the trial or even just gives an opinion about it. Women are the "other" and men are a "human norm". It is unnecessary to hear women's opinion.

The puritan people have a huge fear to god. Therefore puritan applies strict rules to his follower. Sinners will receive severe punishment. In Hester case, she has to get the punishment because she did an adultery. However, since she refuses to confess the truth who is the father of her child, she has to accept the punishment by herself. The sinful act is revealed because Hester get pregnant. According to the fact about Hester's pregnancy which is described above, women get more disadvantages since women who will bear a child. If a woman does the intercourse, she has a chance to get pregnant and it will give significant change in her biological form. As it happened to Hester Prynne in the following data:

> 'She bore in her arms a child, a baby of some three months old, who winked and turned aside its little face

> from the too vivid light of day; because its existence, heretofore, had brought it acquainted only with the gray twilight of a dungeon, or other darksome apartment of the prison.' (TSL: 45)

Hester gave a birth to a baby girl named Pearl as the result of doing the intercourse with Reverend Dimmesdale. The pregnancy seems obvious evidence of their sin, however, only Hester who should get the effect of the sin since Dimmesdale has no evidence after doing the intercourse with Hester and none of them split it out. When Hester gets pregnant, her body shows the pregnancy and people can see stomach gets bigger everyday. It raises the curiosity to the people, because they know her husband is out of town.

After the truth about her pregnancy is revealed, Hester is being trialed. She is judged after she gives a birth to a baby girl. However, Dimmesdale doesn't get any punishment because both Dimmesdale and Hester hide it. Moreover, there's no evidence to prove that he has done the adultery as it seen in Hester. As the result of her sinful act, Hester should wear the scarlet letter which is put exactly on her breast.

> 'Man had marked this woman's sin by a scarlet letter, which had such potent and disastrous efficacy that no human sympathy could reach her, save it were sinful like herself.' (TSL:75)

Based on the quotation above, it can be clearly seen that the man gives Hester punishment because of the sinful act she did. The scarlet letter itself is put as a sign that she has done a sinful act. It puts exactly on her body to show the shame of her because she does the adultery. The badge that put on her body implies that her body is a sign of sinful act. In sexual politic it shows the

oppression to the biological form of women. The oppression that women get is directed to Hester's body.

Besides the punishment that she has to endure, Hester is also forbide to take care her own child. Hester can't take care of her own daughter because she considers a bad mother as can be seen in the quotation below:

> "I feared the woman had no better thought than to make a mountebank of her child!" (TSL: 96)

The quotation above shows the situation in the middle of the trial.The minister, Mr. Wilson, argues about person that should take care Hester's child. Mr. Wilson refuses to give Hester the right of her own child's custody. Hester is considered as a bad mother which will give a bad influence to her own child. Thus, the ministers decide not to give Hester's right as a mother. It also can be seen in the following data:

> "My poor woman," said the not unkind old minister, "The child shall be well cared for! Far better than thou canst do it." (TSL: 95)

Still in the trial, Hester considers that her daughter is a gift from God, her happiness, and she really want to stay with her daughter. However, based on the data above, the old minister considers Hester as a bad mother because of her sin. The injustice consideration showed in the earlier data explains that men authority gives the disadvantage to the woman. Just because of one mistake she committed, Hester is judged as a bad mother. A bad mother means Hester is unable to educate her daughter. However, the fact is she has the capability to take care of her child. The puritan law makes the disadvantage to her by limiting her right as a mother.

The law which made by puritan is basically in authorization of men. In sexual politic it is explained in sociological aspect. The limiting of Hester's right to take care of her child because Hester has the scarlet letter on her breast also can be related to the biological aspect in sexual politic.

As a sinful person, Hester also gets a bad treatment from the others. It can be seen in the following data of how the people of puritan threat Hester like a stranger because she brings a shame to the society

> 'If she entered a church, trusting to share the Sabbath smile of the Universal Father, it was often her mishap to find herself the text of the discourse. She grew to have a dread of children; for they had imbibed from their parents a vague idea of something horrible in this dreary woman, gliding silently through the town, with never any companion but one only child. Therefore, first allowing her to pass, they pursued her at a distance with shrill cries, and the utterance of a word that had no distinct purport to their own minds, but was none the less terrible to her, as proceeding from lips that babbled it unconsciously.' (TSL: 72)

According to the data above, it can be seen that the people of puritan seen Hester like a total stranger. They ignore her and stay away from her. Moreover, they yell from the distance that she is a shameful person.

However, even Hester gets bad treatment from the people around her, her skill in needling makes her more popular. The scarlet letter put on her breast is embroidered by herself and it impressed the people. It's also because of her skill, the governor gives an order to Hester to embroider his gloves.

> 'Hester Prynne went one day to the mansion of Governor Bellingham with a pair of gloves; which she had fringed and embroidered to his order, and which were to be worn on some great occasion of state; for, though the chances of a popular election had caused this

> former ruler to descend a step or two from the highest rank, he still held and honorable and influential place among the colonial magistracy. (TSL: 84)

In the data above, it can be seen when the governor orders Hester to embroider his gloves for the sake of his election. It shows that even Hester is a sinful and everything she does seems nothing and has no value, however, the governor still needs her skill. It can be seen when the governor asks Hester to embroider his gloves. Moreover, he will wear the gloves in the special occasion, the election. It can be assumed that the governor acknowledged Hester excellent sewing skill so that he asks Hester to embroider the gloves.

The skill of Hester's is not just admitted by the governor but also to the people in her society. Many people of puritan use Hester's needlework for their need in fashion.

> Her needlework was seen on the ruff of the Governor; military men wore it on their scarfs, and the minister on his band; it decked the baby's little cap; it was shut up, to be mildewed and moulder away, in the coffins of the dead.' (TSL: 70)

The data above explains that the people of puritan there use Hester needlework. They admit of Hester skill in needling so they ask Hester to help them to make needlework for their daily usage.

Based on the data above shows the economic aspect which affect the limiting of women's rights in puritan. The sociological aspect also involves in the data above because Hester gets different treatment by the people around her.

The explanation above shows the patriarchal system in society where men get the higher authority. The judgment by the minister to Hester shows the control

over the men towards the women. The system oppresses women, because there many restrictions in women's daily activity. Moreover, for those who commits to a sinful act. Hester gets a severe punishment because she does an adultery. It is true that she has done a sin, but the punishment given is directed to her body as a sign of her sin. She loses a lot of her right. She even almost loses her right to take care of her own child.