

# Liberal feminist values as reflected in Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina

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## ABSTRACT

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This research is entitled Liberal Feminist Values As Reflected In Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina. This novel described a woman who broke her wedding because she wants to feel the love. Through Anna Karenina, she fought for her rights to express her opinion to her husband. The purpose of this study is to describe the characteristics of the main character and feminist characteristics of the main character in the novel. Qualitative method is applied in this research. The main data source in this study is Leo Tolstoy's novel Anna Karenina and to complete the data source, this research also uses other books, reviews of novels, films and sources from the internet. The method of data analysis in this study is qualitative method. In this study, a feminist approach from Rosamarie Tong and "Liberal Feminists" from Betty Friedan are employed in this research. The researcher also analyzed the main characters by describing their characteristics using the theory from M.J. Murphy. Based on the analysis, the results of this study have produced several conclusions. First, character of Anna Karenina descriptions by people around her in some characterization there are beautiful, kind, loving, mysterious and negative thinking. Second, Anna Karenina struggle her opinion in public especially her husband. She wants to express and defending her opinion. However, seen from liberal feminism perspective the main character show direct resistance with maintains her opinion and ignore opinion from her husband.

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## 1. Introduction

Anna Karenina is the main character from novel Anna Karenina written by Leo Tolstoy. She was a young woman who married with Alexei Alexandrovich Karenin, they were married without love. Form the beginning he wrote the character of Anna Karenina, Tolstoy wanted to create Anna as a vain woman who has bad morals. But, in the writing process the character changed as a woman who has pride, honest, and admired by people. She was married to Alexei who older than her without love because her parents until one time she could not understand the real love.

Used background from the writer, this novel was told the story about a wife that get criticism from around her people and her husband for her choice to make relationship to her boyfriend. Anna is a wife of Alexei and a mother of Seryozha, she went to Moscow because her brother had adultery with other woman and he asked Anna to help him to talk with her sister in law. She accidentally met Vronsky in an event at Moscow and then both fall in love (Tolstoy, 2015).

In this novel there is a gap between punishment for woman and man. Anna gets social punishment of people around her because having adultery while her brother, Stiva did not get it. In

the novel women noble who not yet married only just do the party and waiting a man who will be married she and women who had married they take care of their child.

Researcher's reason for choosing this novel are the novel was famous in the world and published more 625th and translated in more than 40 languages. Second, the story is different from other novel stories she has ever read. Third, the writer, Leo Tolstoy is a noble in Russian and him bravely to make the novel to insinuating the noble. In every story in the novel has little problem with themselves and others, in every story the main character is always involved and the end of his involvement becomes a controversy. In this novel, the main character is a woman who started a conflict and why she was the only one to be blamed (Neill, 2009).

In this paper, the researcher applies feminist approach to analyzing the novel. The researcher tried to analyze the novel *Anna Karenina* by using feminist theory because in the novel there is a gap between punishment for woman and man. Anna gets social punishment of around her people because having adultery while her brother, Stiva did not get it.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

In book "Feminist Thought" Bryson (2019) liberals defined reason in general in moral and prudential terms. They were agreed that a just society will enable an individual to show his autonomy, and also to satisfy him. According to the liberals "equal" must be given priority above: goodness in other words, the whole system of individual equally is justified, because this equal produces a frame of work, which is the basis for us to choose what is best for each of us as long as we did not take away the equal of others.

According to Friedan, liberal feminists are equal in expressing individual rights for women. Friedan was more towards humanism than feminist because she thought that women have the rights to express their opinions in public. For her the way of thinking that put a woman as a wife and a mother and did not have time for a career has limited her development into a whole person.

Friedan offered another approach that used the idea of androgyny (sharing the same roles in masculine and feminine characters at the same time) to counter the traditional tendency of society to respect the masculine traits and demanded femininity. If the society was encouraged developing positive qualities to masculine and feminine, then people will no longer have reason to lower their feminine side rather than masculine (Lee & Lee, 2018).

The researcher uses liberal feminism because in the novel the main character *Anna Karenina* who has characteristics as a woman who tried to struggle as an individual. She was desperate the rights to express her opinion about what she wants. She wants the rights to get a love in her life without needing to think about what other people said of her. Anna's husband forbade her to express her affair to the public because it would damage people's views of her and according to her husband it was impolite. Her husband said it, because he did not want his dignity to be ruined by his wife's affair. Because of it, the researcher wants to use liberal feminists to examine the problems faced by the main character (The Lancet, 2019).

## 3. Method

In this research, the researcher uses theory of liberal feminism, character and characterization. Theory of liberal feminism use Betty Friedan thought, in Tong book *Feminist Thought* Cline (2019) explained that liberal feminists are equal in expressing individual rights for women. Friedan was more towards humanism than feminist because she thought that women have the rights to express their opinions in public. For her the way of thinking that put a woman as a wife and a mother and did not have time for a career has limited her development into a whole person.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

This undergraduate paper discusses about the struggle of the main character to get the rights in the society as reflected in the main character Anna Karenina in *Anna Karenina*. In this chapter the discussion will be focused about the problem in chapter one and will be focused in objectives of the study which describes the liberal feminist in the main character of Anna Karenina in *Anna Karenina*.

##### *a) Liberal Feminism of Anna Karenina*

According to Friedan, liberal feminists are equality in expressing individual rights for women. Friedan is more towards humanism than feminist because she thought that women have the rights to express their opinions in public. For her, the way of thinking that puts a woman as a wife and a mother and does not have time for a career is to limit her development as a whole person. (Pern, 2008).

From Friedan statement the main character wants to freely express her opinion she felt without people to be concern on it, but Anna Karenina had a husband and her husband is one of the most important men in Petersburg so what Anna act will be seen by society in her surroundings.

“You cannot think how queerly it came about. I only thought of arranging the match, and – suddenly it all came out quite differently. Perhaps against my own will I” She blushed and stopped

“Oh, they feel that at once!” (Tolstoy,1887:97).

This paragraph described after Anna met Vronsky she felt something she had never been heard. In meeting with her sister-in-law Dolly, they talked about Ball who came and suddenly Anna talked how Vronsky as funny person in front her sister-in-law, but she realized her talk and she had to correct her talk, so that she would not fallen in love with him. From the conversation with her sister-in-law, Anna started to have feeling on Vronsky.

“You were not mistaken. I was, and cannot help being, in despair. I listen to you but I am thinking of him. I love him, I am his mistress, I cannot endure you, I am afraid of you, and I hate you. Do what you like to me.” (Tolstoy,1877:209),

In this paragraph, Anna expressed her feeling to her husband that she loved another man. Her husband is not wrong, she has a lover affair with Vronsky is the truth that has been guessed by people around her and she does not care what her husband will do to him. After a statement from Anna, he did not think why his wife was having an affair, what was lacking in him. Because he has a high position in society, he did not think it would hurt his wife’s feeling.

She know all these ways of his and they were all repulsive to her, “Nothing but ambition, nothing but a wish to get on – that is all he has in his soul,” she thought; “and lofty views, love of enlightenment, and religion, are all only means toward getting on.” (Tolstoy,1877:204),

In this paragraph, Anna expressed her opinion about her husband to herself. She explained that her husband was not as described by the people around her. She was tortured by living for eight years with her husband who did not give her any love.

“But I don’t wish to profit by his calamity. I too am suffering and must suffer: I am losing what I most cherished-my good name and my son. I have done wrong, and therefore do not ask for happiness and do not want a divorce. I must go on suffering from the degradation and by the separation from my son.”(Tolstoy,1877:461).

In this paragraph, Anna expressed her feeling what had happened with her. She also suffering with her condition, she just wants to be freed to be loved.

##### *b) The Freedom to Express Opinion*

In the novel Anna was described that she bravely gave her opinion to her husband because her husband forbade her to express her feeling after he knew that Anna is having love affair and people talk about Anna and her love affair (Miloslavskaya & Tolstoy, 2016).

“I must tell you that you behaved improperly to-day,” he said in French (Tolstoy,1877:208),

“What did you consider improper?” Anna asked (Tolstoy,1877:209),

“I asked you once before to conduct yourself in society so that evil tongues might be unable to say anything against you. There was a time when I spoke about inner relations; now I do not speak of them. I speak now of external relations. Your conduct was improper and I do not wish it to occur again.” (Tolstoy,1877:209).

In this conversation it explained that for Alexei his society view is more important than his wife, so he disagreed about Anna’s love affair, for him such a relationship is not suitable to be shown especially when she was married. But in spite of that, her love affair was known by the entire town. Most of the young men envied Vronsky just on account of what was most trying in the affair, namely Karenin’s high rank and the consequent prominence of the affair in society.

“Without honour, without heart, without religion; a depraved woman! I knew it and could see it all along, I though I tried out of pity for her to deceive myself.” (Tolstoy,1877:275).

In this sentence explained that Karenin was disappointed with his wife’s act. He thought that Anna’s act was not based on religion and manners.

“I am a bad woman, a ruined woman,” she thought, “but I dislike lies. I cannot stand falsehood, but his food is falsehood. He knows everything, sees everything – what the does he feel, if he can talk so calmly? If he were to kill me, and if he were to kill Vronsky, I should respect him. But no, lies and propriety is all he cares about.” (Tolstoy,1877:204).

In this paragraph explained that Anna actually regretted what she did, she said it because she could no longer lie and she could not stand the behavior of her husband who was polite.

“I again repeat that I will not know it, I ignore it as long as it is not known to the rest of the world, as long as my name is not dishonoured. Therefore I warn you that our relations must remain what they have been, and that if you let yourself be compromised I shall be obliged to take measure to safeguard my honour” (Tolstoy,1877:314).

In this sentence explained that Karenin wants to save his name from Anna’s problem, he did not care about what his wife doing. He still did not believe that his wife has fallen in love with another man.

“But our relations cannot be what they were before,” Anna began in a timid voice, looking at him with frightened eyes. (Tolstoy,1877:314).

In this paragraph has explained Anna’s bravely answered her Karenin. Her husband wanted their relations to not be broken because Anna’s love affair. She said like it because her husband wanted to protect his name from society.

“You call it cruelly whe a husband gives his wife complete freedom while he affords her honourable shelter, on the one condition that she should observe the laws of property. Is that cruelty?”

“It is worse than cruelty, it is baseness, if you want to know!” Anna exclaimed in a burst of anger, and rose to go.

“Baseness? Since you wish to use that word it is baseness to abandon a husband and a son for lover and to go on eating the husband’s bread!”

“You cannot describe my position as being worse than I know it to be, but why do you tell me all this?” (Tolstoy,1877:358).

“That you should know that as you have not fulfilled my wish that propriety should be observed, I shall tkae steps to put an end to this situation.”

“It will end sooner than you and your lover imagine! You want to satisfy animal passions. . .”

“Alexis Alexandrovich! This is not only ungenerous, but not even gentlemanly to hit one who is down.” (Tolstoy,1877:359).

In this conversation shown how Anna bravely to talk about her husband's behavior. She did not remain silent when she was being insulted by her husband. As a human and woman, she has the rights to express her opinion to other.

*c) Equality in Defending Opinion*

In the novel, after Anna fall in love with Vronsky she began not care about people around her. Karenin as her husband has tried to warn her to not act like a girl who falling in love because she has a husband but she did not listen to her husband.

“I wish to warn you” Karenin said in low tones, “that you may, by indiscretion and carelessness, give the world occasion to talk about you. Your too animated conversation to-night with Count Vronsky” (he pronounced the name firmly and with quiet deliberation) “attracted attention” (Tolstoy,1877:143).

Although her husband said that he like it, Anna ignored what her husband said for to her, the relation she had with Vronsky just a friend and they were freed to talk in public and there was no prohibition to speak to the opposite sex because they are married. But, because of some opinions from people around Karenin, he had to tell his wife to do not act like that.

“You are always like that,” she replied, as if not understanding him at all, and intentionally taking notice only of his last words. “One day you dislike my being dull, another day my being happy. I was not dull. Does that offend you? (Tolstoy,1877:143).

In this paragraph explained that Anna ignored her husband words, even though a wife had to obey and listen to what her husband said. She felt that her act is just something normal, because of that, she ignored her husband's words.

“This is what I intended to say,” he continued coldly and calmly, “And I ask you to listen to me. As you know, I consider jealousy an insulting and degrading feeling and will never allow myself to be guided by it; but there are certain laws of propriety which one cannot disregard with impunity. I did not notice it this evening, but, judging by the impression created, all present noticed that you behaved and acted not quited as was desirable.” (Tolstoy,1877:143).

In this paragraph explain that Karenin dislikes Anna’s act in public, he assumed that what Anna had done was wrong, she must did not act like it.

“Really, I don’t understand at all,” said Anna, shrugging her shoulders. “It is all the same to him!” she said to herself. “But Society noticed, and that disturbs him! You are not well, Alexis Alexandrovich” (Tolstoy,1877:144)

In this parapraph explain that Anna answered Karenin’s words, she said it because her husband cared with people round him about their thought so that he did not want to see his wife become gossip in society. For her, what she had been doing is not a fault and a sin.

“Well, and how’s Kitty?” she asked with a deep sigh and a guilty glance at Dolly. “Tell me the truth, Dolly: is she not angry with me?”

“Angry? No!” replied Dolly with smile

“But she hates and despises me?”

“Oh no! But you know one does forgive those things!”

“No, no,” said Anna, turning away and looking out of the open window. “But it was no my fault, and whose fault was it? What does being in fault mean? Could things have been different? Now, what do you think? Could it have happened to you not to be Steve’s wife?”(Tolystoy,1877:628).

In this conversation was shown how Anna felt sorry to Kitty who was fallen in love with Vronsky but she did nothing wrong. She also did not want it but she also wanted a love and Vronsky was the one that she got that from. But Vronsky did not have a girlfriend at the time so Anna was not feeling guilty of letting herself fallen for Vronsky.

But if she has goes back to Karenin whether he will accept it or even laugh at her stupidity. Because she did not want to be considered weak by her ex-husband, she tried to threaten to commit suicide if Vronsky still remained like that. Because only considered by the wind then by Vronsky he also dared to commit suicide. Anna did not care about the words of people around her that she wanted to just live with love and be loved, but because of her love that was too deep made her blamed by jealous fire and she could not control herself made her end her own life. Anna thought if

she died maybe her ex-husband, her son and herself would be free of disgrace and shame and she thought whether Vronsky cried she died or not.

She realized what she had to do, Quickly and lightly descending the steps that led from the water-tank to the rails, she stopped close to the passing tram. She looked at the bottom of the trucks, at the bolts and chains and large iron wheels of the slowly-moving front truck, and tried to estimate the middle point between the front and back wheels, and the moment when that point would be opposite her.” There, into the very middle, and I shall punish him and escape from everybody and from myself” (Tolstoy,1877:757).

In the end of Anna's decision was to choose suicide, Vronsky felt devastated by her death. Her husband chose to take care of the two children left by Anna. Kitty, who before hated Anna for taking Vronsky from her, now lives happily with her best friend Levin and in the gift of a child.

“And they are all down on Anna! What for? Am I better than she? I at least have a husband whom I love. Not as I wished to love, but still I do love him; but Anna did not love hers. In what is she to blame? She wishes to live. God has implanted that need in our souls. It is quite possible I might have done the same. I don’t even now know whether I did well to listen to her at that terrible time when came to me in Moscow. I ought then to have left my husband and begun life anew. I might have loved and been loved, the real way. And is it better now? I don’t respect him. I need him.” she thought of her husband. (Tolstoy,1877:601).

In this quote was described reaction from Dolly, sister-in-law of Anna. She did not blame what Anna did, because Anna is a woman with rights to live and get loves. She just expressed her opinion about love another man, she felt her husband.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the discussion on chapter three, the researcher uses feminist theory by Betty Freidan to analyze liberal feminist of the main character in Anna Karenina by Leo Tolstoy. In liberal feminist she wants to express her feeling and she wants freedom from her husband.

From the results, Anna Karenina characterization explain in five characterization there are beautiful like other woman, second people saw that she so kind, third she looks loving so people around her fall in love with her, fourth form seen by other character she has some character who can not explain so she has mysterious characterization, the last she always negative thinking if she does not gets answer. Seen from liberal feminist perspective Anna succeeded maintains in some way there are she wants to express her opinion to social in her era and she wants to gets equality in defending her opinion from her husband. In short, the researcher found the relation of the theory and the story of the novel that women have the rights to express their opinions in public. In this novel she shows that she can get through her life from society by maintaining her opinions and rights.

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