

Conference Paper

Women position in marriage: Finding gender relations in novel Indonesia Period of balai pustaka, period of 66, and period of the 70s

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Abstract

This study aims to describe and to see the development of women's position in the marriage presented in the Indonesian novels: the period of *Balai Pustaka* (BP), the period of 66, and the period of the 70s. The data sources of this research were novel of *Azab dan Sengsara* (period of BP), *Pada Sebuah Kapal* (the period of 66), as well as *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, *Lintang Kemukus Dini Hari*, and *Jantera Bianglala* (the period of the 70s). The approach used was complementary feminism (Islamic feminism) using ideological feminist literary criticism. The research method used was a descriptive method. With content analysis technique, the results show the following. First, in marriage, the female characters in the novels were positioned asymmetrically: inferior wives-superior husbands, serving wives-husbands served, wife owned-husbands possess. Second, although women's position did not change, the "desire" of women in marriage is fluctuating. In the BP period, women desire to be wives who dedicate their lives to serving their husbands in total. In the period of 66, women wished to achieve happiness by breaking through the domestic boundaries of "hers". In contrast, in the 70s, women aspired to be "women" to one man.

Keywords: complementary feminism, gender relations, women's position

1. Introduction

In the classical jurisprudence, the institution of marriage has placed the function of a woman (wife) as goods or things. This appears, for example, in the definition given by the jurists. By language, marriage is *ad-dammu wal wat'u* which means *to gather* and *to intercourse* or *'ibaratun 'an al-wat'i wa al-'aqdi jam'an*. According to the term *syariah*, marriage is a contract containing the ability to have intercourse with *lafaz inkah* atau *tazwij* [1]. Among the jurists of *fiqh*, in principle, the definition is no different. The differences are only redactional. They agree that marriage is a religiously regulated

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Received: 6 April 2018

Accepted: 3 May 2018

Published: 26 July 2018

Publishing services provided by
Knowledge E

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Selection and Peer-review under the responsibility of the ISLLE 2017 Conference Committee.

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contract to give men the right to have the use of women's *farji* and all of their bodies for enjoyment as a primary purpose [1].

In addition to experiencing simplification of meaning, in the perspective of gender justice, the above definition contains gender bias for two reasons. (1) The definition has likened women to goods that can be owned. (2) The definition has denied women's sexual desire. Male and female intimate relationships seem to be a man's requirement only. In that connection, women are placed as objects. Although the Qur'an (Surat an-Nisa ':19) and some traditions emphasize the necessity of the husband to do *ma'ruf* 'to his wife, the religious views of Islamic society, as reflected in the classic book, still put women as objects, while men as the subject.

In this paper, the problem is how the position of women in marriage in the Indonesian novels *Balai Pustaka* period (BP), the period of 66, and the period of the '70s. The purpose of this paper is to describe and to know the development of the position of female characters in marriage in the Indonesian novel period BP, 66, and 70s. The literary works sampled in this research are *Azab and Sengsara* by Merari Siregar (Period of BP), *Pada Sebuah Kapal* by N.H. Dini (Period of 66), and *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* trilogy, *Lintang Kemukus Dini Hari*, and *Jantera Bianglala* by Ahmad Tohari (70s period). The six novels include prominent novels in their respective periods. The approach used is the approach of Islamic feminism or also known as complementary feminism. The Feminism Literary Criticism (FLC) used is the ideological FLC. Meanwhile, the method used in this research is a descriptive method, namely problem solving to literary works based on facts that appear or as it is (Siswantoro, 2010:56). This method is applied to describe the position of women in marriage in the novel objects of research as mentioned above.

As an institution whose birth can not be separated by social-cultural aspects, literature is influenced by the society. It not only records life but also shapes it. The form should be viewed as a reception, modification, or negation of reality. Great literary works do not simply describe the social world in a crude way [3]. He has an urgent task: to play the figures of his creation in a fictional situation in order to seek their own "destiny" to further discover values and meaning in the social world. Great literary works portray human anxiety, hope, and aspirations. Therefore, it is the most effective sociological barometer to measure human responses to social forces [4]

As expressive symbols, communication mediums, and transcendental manifestations, the social functions of literary works are not limited only as a material-cultural explanation from one individual to another but are transmitted from one community to another, from one generation to another [5]. From the sociological assumption,

women's issues related to their relationship with men are responded imaginatively by the author as collective or transindividual subjects in the manifestations of literary works. Weak bargaining of women in determining matters relating to their status as wives (such as the determination of the number of offspring, the necessity of unilateral clearance, the issue of sexual intercourse, etc.), various acts of physical, psychological and sexual violence that afflict women in the domestic realm, as well as the inferior position of women in the marriages contained in the literary work, is a social and cultural reflection of the people who gave birth to it. Therefore, to analyze the relationship of men to women (gender relations) in this literary work required a critique approach to feminist literature.

Feminist literary criticism is used to deconstruct patriarchal politics as represented in literary works. Kate Millet, for example, analyzes the ideological implications of depictions of sexual behavior. Carolyn Heilburn traces the history of androgyny through Western literature to legitimize androgyny as an alternative to patriarchy. Mary Daly also synthesizes history, philosophy, and radical politics to draw the reader's attention to the language used. In the *Journal of Women*, Humm states that the criticism of feminist literature is a major challenge to the institutionalization of literature. In this paper, feminist literary criticism is used to analyze the position of women in marriage by reading as a woman, ie reading literary texts with the awareness that there is one-sided gender dominance on the other side [6].

2. Results

2.1. Position of women in marriage on novel *Azab and Sengsara* by Merari Siregar (Period of Balai Pustaka)

Marriage is a traditional destiny given to women by society [7]. Marriage is seen as something sacred, a commitment of men and women to achieve serenity, peace of life. From that reference, celibate women are viewed as people against the institution. For women, the "destiny" of her wife status carries the consequences of her life between two choices: as a wife who only serves as her husband's spouse or becomes a wife with access to the public world, whose potential, abilities, and abilities are developed and respected. But being the last wife is not easy. In addition to community culture that is not "aligned" with women, the unwillingness of husbands to open access to public spaces is an obstacle. As a result, women live in the following two possibilities. (1) Women accept the fate of their lives patiently, resigned, and *tawakal* even though he

lives in the domination of her husband. (2) The woman tries to defend the household (even if the household is not harmonious), but she seeks "happiness" with a man other than her husband.

The status of a devoted wife to her husband is seen as a noble task. A wife who has spent most of her life "spent" in the domestic territory and dedicated to pleasing, serving, and helping her husband be considered a noble job. Religious texts legitimize and justify this view and are socialized to (child) women from generation to generation. This status ultimately creates an "ideology" for women that the position of a devoted wife to her husband is a "devotion" that brings rewards so that the gender injustices (dominance, marginalization, even domestic violence) carried out by her husband is considered *ujian*, a living destiny that must receive with courage and *tawakal*.

In the first novel *Balai Pustaka, Azab and Sengsara*, Nuria (Mariamin's mother) is depicted as a mother who has the persona and "perfect" behavior. He is faithful, kind, patient, compassionate, speechless language, and "knows to respect people"[8]. His character and good character contradicts the character of her husband who is cruel, arrogant, and ignorant of others. The description of the psychic as well as the quality and level of devotion to Sutan Baringin. Although she often receives harsh treatment from her husband, she constantly tries to please her husband with all her heart. In short, Nuria is a true woman [8].

As a faithful, patient, steadfast, and trustworthy wife, Nuria accepts the suffering. She devoted her whole life to serving her husband wholeheartedly. If her husband goes to the diner at night only to converse with people belonging to the "poor folks", she awaits her arrival, greeting her with cheerful faces and gentle words. Nevertheless, the character of a true wife can not be united with the nature of the evil husband. What the woman showed was not able to change her husband's persona. This is so because of the traditional marriage philosophy that views women as inferior beings. For Sutan Baringin, women were created by God just supplements for men. If a man needs a woman, he marries her. Marriage means the willingness and willingness of women to be taken, owned by men. In total, a wife must surrender her soul, body, and heart to her husband. She is obliged to please her husband, love her husband without having to get the love back from her husband. Conversely, the obligation of the husband to provide only a living, just "provide shopping" for his wife [9].

The attitude of resignation, patience, passivity, weakness, and obedience to the husband of the woman can not be separated from the religious reality of society (Islam) where they live. In the Islamic society, the ideal image of the virtuous woman

is represented by Nuria even though that attitude shows their inferiority in the presence of her husband. Of course, the performance shown by him is based on religious texts, especially the hadith of the Prophet, regardless of whether the hadith is valid or otherwise.

Many doubtful traditions justify the crippling relationship. One of the religious texts demanding that women submit to their husbands is the hadith about servant wife to her husband. In terms of the quality of sanad, this hadith includes the *mutawatir* and famous traditions with a convincing requirement [9]. Meanwhile, in quality (*sanad*), these traditions include hadith *hasan*, that is, the traditions are duly authenticated (good and worthy of argumentation). Nevertheless, many Islamic scholars doubt the validity of these misogynist traditions. Ibn Hazm for example, says that the misogynist traditions quoted by the jurisprudence books are *daif*, or at least need to be examined for their validity as legal propositions [9]. In fact, the hadith *sujud kepada suami* above belongs to the hadith *daif* because the intelligence of two narrations, Husain bin 'Abdurrahman and Syuraik bin Abdillah bin Abi Syuraik, received negative criticism [10]. Furthermore, he (2003: 110) judge, in essence, both *sanad* and *matan* hadith is *daif*.

From *the asbab al-wurud* above it can be stated that the core message of the hadith is the establishment of monotheism [9]. However, this strategic message is actually drowned by the popularity of its additional messages. This error is caused by a shift from *the mukhathab* (target) directed to the worshipers of fellow human beings (bishops and commander) to the problem of hierarchical relations of husband and wife. Therefore, in the books of hadith, the religious text mentioned above is more published in the chapter of marriage of husband and wife rather than chapter monotheism. In fact, in some jurisprudence, this hadith is quoted only to support the supremacy of husbands against wives.

In the context of Nuria's household, Characteristic of devotional wife to husband should be read proportionately. That is, the properties are not only charged to the wife but also must be owned by the husband. Pleasant attitude when viewed, obedient when governed, and keep themselves at home (which is done Nuria) should also be shown by Sutan Baringin. All this is needed to create a peaceful home atmosphere on the basis of mutual respect and respect. Thus, in the view of Islam, marital relations should be woven with the principle of *muasyarah bi al-ma'ruf* 'good association'.

2.2. Position of women in marriage on Novels Pada Sebuah Kapal by N.H. Dini (Period of 66)

The marriage philosophy that shows the relationship between asymmetrical husband and wife (inferior wife-superior husband) is passed by the novel *Pada Sebuah Kapal* [11]. As a housewife, with a "noble" role, is not based on the wishes of women, but is conditioned from birth. In the process of enculturation and socialization, ideas about women's reproductive function are under intense pressure by treating girls differently. From childhood, girls are forced to be shy, not powerful, timid, loyal, patient, not demanding, or obedient girls. They are also pressed to be no superior to men, whether in education, economics, or socially [12].

In this novel, the concept of husband-wife inequality is maintained. This work has shown how Sri is trying to devote herself, serve, and please her husband by spending her time learning to cook her husband's favorite dishes because she believes that "a husband's love is dependent on his wife's ability to cook" [11]. The position of wife's dependence upon the husband, in fact, has created the wife's helplessness to do "resistance". Although Sri, in the end, did not love Charles, because of the wife's obligation to serve her husband, she was still unable to refuse to "serve" her husband [11].

However, unlike the novel *Azab dan Sengsara* featuring the patient, steadfast, *nrimo* Nuria, endure the suffering (which assumes it is fate), while still emphasizing the importance of the feeling of love in a marital relationship, the novel has done a breakthrough. Love is the basic foundation of household harmony, but when this base is ignored by one, the husband or wife can rebel against the traditional standard of marriage. Although Sri had been "created into a woman" to be a devotee of her husband, she resisted her husband because of his stubbornness and consider himself superior [11]. This is as revealed by Sri below.

And every word I roughly planted and I took it deeply without my answer.
But it's all gone by now. I became immune. Let me not be the perfect wife
I have always crammed with my parents, as I have always craved myself
all along. It only applies to men who show their love to their wives in a real
manner, both during their time together and in other people's surroundings
[11].

In Islam, marriage is a vehicle for healthy human breeding, in the broadest sense of the physical, psychological, mental, social, and spiritual. Within this framework, *the Quran* affirms the importance of good ways that husbands and wives should do, or

what is known as *mu'asyarah bi al-ma'ruf*. The verses of *the Qur'an* that deal with marital matters and the things related to them, such as sexual relations, livelihood, breastfeeding, divorce, etc. are always associated with al-ma'ruf.

Citing the opinions of some of the great scholars, Hussein Muhammad explains the meaning of this word.

Al-ma'ruf comes from the root of 'urf which literally means *tradition, custom, or culture*. Because traditions and habits are well known to the people, *ma'ruf* is also known as *something well known*. Ar-Raghib al-Ishfahani states that *ma'ruf* is anything or deed which by reason and religion is seen as something good. In his interpretation of *Al-Manar*, Muhammad Abduh defines *ma'ruf* with everything that has been known in human society which is considered good by reason and healthy instincts. Even so, Ibn Abi Jamrah mentions *ma'ruf* with things that the religious arguments are known as something good that happens in customs, culture, and so on [13]

Based on the above explanation, *mu'asyarah bi al-ma'ruf* must be understood as a relationship built in ways that are either in accordance with the traditions or situations of their respective communities, but not contradictory, both with the norms of religion, common sense, as well as the basic values of humanity. Thus, in the novel, the emergence of Sri's rebellious attitude was triggered by the behavior of her husband who often spoke harshly and acted harshly against her. In other words, the rebellion was a response to her husband's behavior that did not show *bi al-ma'ruf muasyarah*.

On this basis, the lives of Charles Vincent and Sri will proceed in healthy ways. This method should be done with mutual giving and receiving sincerely, respect each other and understand their own interests, without coercion and violence. The obligation of Charles Vincent as a breadwinner does not necessarily place himself superior to Sri because marriage is a social contract between two equal individuals [10]. In the term *al-Quran*, marriage bonds are named *misaqan ghaliza* (a strong covenant). This bond should be based on the spirit of *mu'asyarah bi al-ma'ruf* which denotes the melting of the hierarchy of master-servant relations. Harmony in mutual love, belonging to each other, admonish each other, and being faithful is the answer to eliminating the servitude that keeps Sri from being in her own paradise. If this is the case, it is difficult for Sri to fight because she is a gentle and gentle woman. Again, the woman's resistance was caused by her husband's abusive treatment for more than a year.

The novel *Pada Sebuah Kapal* is a transition between Eastern culture and Western culture. This novel is at the point of ambiguity, at the point of its uneasiness amid

the values of the two cultures. On the one hand, he adopted the Western values by showing the courage of the character Sri make an affair with Michel. On the other hand, this novel still places the tradition or the eastern value, the element of loyalty as a valuable value. Although her household did not get happiness, she did not have the courage to divorce her husband for loyalty reasons. In the novel, this element must always be attached to the woman (East) as a condition of the wholeness and happiness of the household although she suffered physical or psychological suffering due to her abusive husband's treatment.

2.3. Position of women in marriage on Novels Trilogi Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk (Period of the 70s)

The inferiority of the status of women in marriage which shows the grandeur of the wife's status which in totality devotes her life to the delight and service of her husband finds her example in the trilogy novel *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*. This novel views that status as a wife, as a housewife is a noble status that is in harmony with the views of Islam. This is shown after Srintil, the female lead character of the novel, suffered as a *ronggeng*. As a *ronggeng*, the woman experiences gender equality treatment from men in her community. He was dominated by his grandfather, Sakarya, who seceded and surrendered himself to Kartareja and Nyai Kartareja to be *ronggeng*. He was rejected by Rasus for his desire to be the man's wife. Virginity is sold by herbalists *ronggeng* it to men who are able to meet the material requirements demanded by the husband and wife in the procession *bukak klambu*. He is prostituted by both. In fact, he was harassed and raped by men who wanted him.

His desire to be the wife of a man and a housewife, in line with Islamic values, had implications for him to resist the patriarchal tradition of his society. Resistance is done through two things. (1) Srintil refused to bark and become *ronggeng*. As compensation from that, he actually "closer" himself, familiarizing himself with the shepherd boys and Goder who is a symbol of innocence, purity. (2) He rejects Marsusi, head of the Wanakeling estate, who intends to "wear" him. Srintil fled to the Dawuan market when the man came to his house. Forcing husband and wife Kartareja and Marsusi to himself gives awareness that he will be controlled by others. In itself comes the process of awareness that women have the full right to control themselves, their will, without any intervention from anyone.

At this point, the novel considers that the refusal of Rasus to accept the woman to be his wife and the exhausting suffering of so much of the male treatment made her self-consciousness appear. In this context, the release of Srintil from the control of others, and his rejection of male domination and violence are a step forward. Therefore, he was determined to realize himself to be a domestic woman with Rasus or not with Rasus, the man who had been his idealization. For Srintil, being a wife for one man is the essence of harmony between men and women. In this regard, the text describes it as follows.

Then Srintil himself felt the bitterness of the history of his life as a woman of public property. He wants to reverse the original meaning; Being a certain male wife is the heart of the balance between femininity and maleness. Thus, the task of a wife is nobler than the task of a *ronggeng*. And this morning Srintil heard Sakum say that he is no longer a *ronggeng* [14].

The shift in Srintil's view from publicly-owned women to domestic women is a universal message of this novel in the Islamic perspective. Free sex (adultery and prostitution) represented by the role of *ronggeng*, is extreme, posed with the role of the wife in marriage. As an institution, marriage is encouraged by Islam because family life not only ensures human survival but also ensures social stability and a dignified existence for men and women. According to Islam, there is nothing wrong with sex if used for the purpose of procreation within the framework of a legitimate marriage, and not just for pleasure alone. According to the *Qur'an*, husband and wife are like each other's clothes (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 187). Thus, marriage is not only a sexual motive that brings men and women together. Marriage has a higher purpose and a great motive, as well as a loving and loving relationship. This is, indeed, what Srintil wants. He became the wife of Rasus or other men within the framework of legitimate bonds.

This novel, it seems, persists and emphasizes its ideology that the mother and wife status of a woman is noble and should be the ideal for a Muslim woman. As a good wife, women should behave, act and be able to do to please the husband, even obliged to provide service and devotion in total. In various forms of discourse, it appears that the role of women as wives and mothers is quite dominant, not only defined by men, but also by women themselves [15]. The ideology of familialism reproduced in various forms of discourse has become an important force in awakening women about their domestic role. That is why, when Rasus came home to visit his sick grandmother in Dukuh Paruk, Srintil served him as a husband.

To show the importance of wife's status in Islam, to the extreme, this novel takes an important step. The step is to compile, position, and confront the glory of *the status* (through the idealism of Srintil and the morality of some women outside Dukuh Paruk) with the prevailing community values in Dukuh Paruk. Women Dukuh Paruk never questioned the action as something negative [16]. In other words, they do not forbid prostitution [17]. On the other hand, the high *status* of wives is represented by Siti's figure, Dawuan District Girl. Although not all Dawuan women are well behaved, the experience of Rasus with Siti is able to change his paradigm of thinking about the harlot women represented by the women of Dukuh Paruk, and the good women represented by some of Dawuan's women. Here, as the representative of the Dukuh Paruk woman, Srintil is positioned and confronted with Siti: the harlot is opposed to the good woman. Whereas, in the cultural paradigm of patriarchal society, which views female sexuality in the domain of male domination, that is, to serve the needs of men, the distinction between female and other females (good) can not be established. Both female and female prostitutes "provide themselves" to serve sexual men (husbands). In that sense, prostitution is merely a form of oppression of the dignity of women.

The issues experienced by these women are the subordination or position of their inferiority to men (husbands). They become servants and male servants who provide part or the totality of their life activities to please and meet the needs of men. In other words, they are placed in an unequal position in marriage. Of course, the role of women or wives who are only aimed at serving men or husbands, such as Nuriyah, Sri, and Srintil are not ideal images of Islam.

In Islam, women are not limited to their activities as long as they do not conflict with Islamic laws. The Prophet himself has ordered his people, including women, to study. The command was responded by Muslim women by showing their sincerity in obtaining information about Islam from its original source, the Prophet. In various traditions, the Prophet never discriminates the audience that follows the education, either in the mosque or elsewhere. Women are also often told the Prophet as a group of people who are eager to study the religion. Some hadith illustrates that a woman deliberately came from afar to question the Prophet. In particular, Siti 'Aisyah once praised the interest of Anshar women for science. In fact, in a hadith narrated by him, the Prophet had been urged by the female companions to provide a special time for them to gain knowledge from him.

3. Conclusion

Based on the above description, there are at least two things that need to be underlined. (1) In marriage, women are positioned inferiorly. He has no bargaining in determining the affairs of his household which is his future. (2) Although in marriage the position of women has not changed, the desire of women to remain in the domestic territory, dedicating their life to serving their husbands is important in research novels. However, it should be noted that the female characters in the novel are fighting in their own way to achieve idealized *status*.

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