

Subalternity of Hindia Women in *Racun untuk Tuan* Short Story by Iksaka Banu: Postcolonial Studies

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Abstract— This research aims to reveal the description of the subalternity of Hindian women in the “Racun untuk Tuan” short story by Iksaka Banu. This study applied a qualitative content analysis method to obtain details of the picture of subalternity which occurred in Hindian women. The results of this study indicate that there was a subalternity of Hindian women. The dual Subalternity experienced by Hindian women made women powerless in the social, cultural, political and geographical construction carried out by men of colonial rule. The subalternity experienced by Hindian women were caused by the domination of the colonial rulers and the elements of the patriarchal culture that they carried. The result of this subalternity was Indies women could not speak (confined), because they had to submit fully to the invaders.

Keyword— *subalternity, women, colonial, feminist literature*

I. INTRODUCTION

The dominance of the nation-state, cobbled together through compromises and coercion during the nationalist struggle against British rule, became precarious as its program of capitalist modernity sharpened social and political inequalities and conflicts (Gyan, 2016). On the other hand, In Third World especially, in the South Asian region, the situation for women generally consists of problems caused by cultural and economic strains. However, it is also observed that the same problems in a subtler way are faced by migrant women who live a life of double oppression; first as second rate citizens and then as Diaspora entities (Karim & Nasir, 2014). then specifically, the issue of women also entered the realm of colonialism in the West, especially the Dutch who colonized the Hindian (Indonesia). Women typically in the colonial era experienced several dimensions of complex treatment, for example, the depiction of sexual interaction as a field of rape, marriage between colonial and indigenous nations (concubines), and some struggles in the search for the identity of a woman.

Issues concerning sexuality and gender are rooted in postcolonial discourses. Diverse thoughts about the life of women in the colonial era emerged a problem, namely how to see women from the stand point of the colonized. (Martono, 2011). Martono’s view above seems to lead someone to think that the dominance of patriarchal culture brought by the colonial nation resulted in the subordination of colonized nations to colonizing powers, such as the social submission of women to men. those in power are the

invaders (the whites) and those powerless are the indigenous.

The term subaltern in postcolonial studies is used by Gayatri C. Spivak to designate individuals or groups who experience oppression from other more powerful groups. Subalternity study for Spivak, emphasizes identified differences between practices and applied theories (Gandhi, 1998). Spivak in her essay entitled “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Obviously elaborates on several other contexts in representational systems that compete vigorously to replace the subaltern figure which is heard (Gandhi, 1998). More broadly Spivak appoints subalterns to individuals or groups who do not have access to hegemonic power such as women, farmers, laborers, and other poor people. For Spivak in postcolonial studies, the term refers to everything related to limiting women’s access to a kind of differentiating space (Setiawan, 2018).

Based on this background, this research problem can be focussed in the following questions; what kind of subalternity happened to Hindian women in “Racun untuk Tuan” short story by Iksaka Banu? Whereas the purpose of this research is to reveal and find out the form and manifestation of Hindian Indigenous sub-languages in the “Racun untuk Tuan” short story by Iksaka Banu. The aim of this research is to find out the gender relations in Indonesia where gender inequality occurs, one of which is caused by the power relations of the western world towards the eastern world in which gender is not something that already existed before it is constructed by the local culture that built it. The theory used in this study is postcolonial literary criticism using feminist angle.

There are only two authors who focus on subaltern study, Jalal Mostafae, and Ali Al Omari. This paper generally discusses women who lived in Hindian (Indonesia) society. The study conducted by Ali Al Omari (2017) discusses various forms of the subaltern, the effects of marginalization of subaltern characters, and postcolonial discourse among subaltern characters related to different societal backgrounds. He discusses the overall subaltern form that occurs in the novel, both form contains, title, language, tone, many points of view, and characters, all forms of postcolonial frames and arrangements for all novels that address the issue of racism and child abuse that occurs in the United States (Asad Mashaqi & Ali Al Omari, 2017).

Further research conducted by Jalal Mostafae (2016) reveals that discusses the colonialist Gayatri Spivak

Marxist concept of Subaltern, colonial discourse and false consciousness. In postmodernist fiction, there are fears that historical problems such as the scale of violence in the second world war, Nazi genocide, cold war, and European colonialism have made fiction a medium for the history it is contained in the Chinua Achebe novel. This study also describes the manifestations of colonialism and their subsequent impact on dominant literary texts and discourse. In exploring these terms, this dissertation seeks to examine carefully the Gayatri Spivak subaltern concept in Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart" is no longer at ease. Furthermore, this paper demonstrates Spivak's voice against differences, categorization of classes and subaltern subjects who are marginalized by the emergence of colonialism. The significance of social class and social discourse became predominant; therefore, the colonial discourse was installed into social-cultural and literary text construction, especially those contained in novels (Mostafae, 2016).

It is obvious that this research has a close relation to the two previous studies, especially the discussion of subalterns that occurred in the former European colonies. This study, however, focuses more on the subalternity experienced by Hindia women as main characters in "Racun untuk Tuan" by Iksaka Banu.

The subalternity of women is presented in the "Racun untuk Tuan" short story by Iksaka Banu. "Racun untuk Tuan" is one of thirteen collections of short stories under the title *Semua untuk Hindia*. "Racun untuk Tuan" short story contains about the lives of Hindian women who experienced physical and psychological violence, especially those women who became mistresses/heroines of the colonizing nation. Iksaka Banu tells the background of Dutch colonialism which focused on the problems of colonial era women. The image of indigenous women who are married to the Dutch is only an outlet for the Dutch during their colonization of Indonesia. Imah is unable to resist the domination of the white invaders, at that time all that could be done is to be silent and obey what the Dutch colonialists wanted, Imah as an indigenous woman is only manipulated by the Dutch to satisfy their desires while in Indonesia. Until then Imah is abandoned by the Dutch, when the Dutch are no longer on duty in Indonesia (after their tenure) then returned to their homeland and married their fellow Dutchmen (fellow white people), on this issue more white men proud to be married and live together with fellow or white women rather than colonized indigenous peoples.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative method with the study of textual criticism. This study utilizes reading and note techniques to obtain the required data. The source of data research comes from the short story *Poison for the Lord*, which is one of thirteen short stories written by Iksaka Banu, the second edition published by the Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia (KPG) Jakarta in 2018, and award winner Kusala Sastra Khatulistiwa. The research data are

short text excerpts containing subalternity of Hindia women.

The steps in this study are as follows, first is the reading of the short story *Poison For the Master* as a whole and repeatedly to get a deep understanding, next is a deeper reading of the hermeneutics to get more detailed text data. The second is to note the research needs in accordance with the indicators of the issues raised. The third is to make data classification according to the problem indicator. Fourth, analyze data according to the problem. Data analyzed in accordance with the theoretical basis used. The fifth is to draw conclusions from the analysis that has been used.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The term of Gayatri Spivak Marxist-Post colonialist conceptions of the subaltern, colonial discourse and false consciousness. Gayatri Spivak is one of the leading figures associated with contemporary cultural and critical theories to challenge the "legacy of colonialism" and the way readers engage with literature and culture. Spivak represents the voice of difference, however other post-colonialist theoreticians such as Bhabha and Said ignore the concept of difference. Beside difference, the notion of social class is one of her major subcategories. She has frequently focused on what in postcolonial studies has come to be called the subaltern (Mostafae, 2016). Specifically, Spivak develops subalterns, not just classy words that are shown for the oppressed class or for the other group.

Spivak focuses its studies on India women, including western criticism of the sati tradition in India. The West considers the sati tradition to be a form of decline in civilization that considers women to be objects that experience cruel criminal acts that widows who burn themselves must be saved, whereas in India sati perspective it is a form of respect, devotion and loyalty, and courage that must be admired by a woman left behind dead her husband. as mentioned Misir, (2018) assumes that Western intellectual thought, through its modes of analysis and perspectives, continues to influence and sustain a biased colonial historiography on the social degradation of the colonized Indian woman. This is why the colonial historiography requires urgent review (Misir, 2018). The problem in this lies in how the west wants to perceive themselves by criticizing the sati tradition in India.

This entails more comprehensive knowledge of the ideologies that legitimized and reproduced apartheid, of how the state that privileged whites also disciplined and regulated them (while they were themselves often agents of a highly authoritarian bureaucracy), as well as of the ethnography of whites. I will argue that Subaltern Studies, a perspective that had its starting point in India in the 1980s in a Marxism-inspired historiography "of below" venturing into new theoretical and methodological terrains, represents a useful theoretical and methodological entry point into this history, albeit not without its problems (Roos, 2016). According to Spivak, the West wants to take perception by defining themselves through the India sati tradition. If in the context of colonial production, the

subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow (Ray, 2009)

Subaltern in Spivak's perspective places women in various colonial contexts without conceptual language to speak, because there is no ear from colonial or indigenous men to listen to it (Gandhi, 1998). This perspective literally places women as objects, in this case also shows that women cannot represent themselves or must be represented by others. This case of discourse shows that there is no subject position in the era of colonialism that allows women to articulate themselves as individuals because they are destined to "shut up". The subaltern cannot speak, the female intellectual as intellectual has a circumscribed task which must not be written with a flourish (Mostafae, 2016). Bias or the impact arising from the treatment of colonists against women in the postcolonial era is about the participation of women in public and political life, namely, women lack adequate access to strategic sectors caused by the construction of colonial culture that places women as second-class citizens.

Hindian women at the end of 19th century to the beginning of 20th century are described as no more than "mistresses" or "Nyai" to the Dutchmen. The Dutch colonized Indonesia for almost three and a half centuries, for men who invaded those who lived in Indonesia not only needed physical needs but also sexual needs. Because the law in the Netherlands prohibits Christian men from marrying non-Christian women (except for women being baptized), then there is no other choice for male invaders not to marry Hindia women, that is by simply making them mistresses. This treatment is not merely forced by colonial men, but also this was a pleasure for them and had become a kind of colonial culture where men living in the Indies had to have mistresses.

A. *The Hindian Subalternity of Women in "Racun untuk Tuan" Short Story*

The main female figure in the *Racun untuk Tuan* short story is Imah, an indigenous Javanese woman who became a tobacco picker. Imah is described as having light brown skin and a rather small body. Imah married by a Dutchman named Freed who is on duty in Hindia, of course, in the interests of colonialism. Imah is accompanied by Freed and blessed with two children named Joost (Sinyo) and Kaatje (Nona). Because Imah is the concubine of a Dutchman without marital status, the necessity that Imah must be fully obeyed and Freed must even call "lord" in everyday circumstances. It is generally illustrated that Nyai must call master to European men.

Imah realized that her position at that time is nothing more than a concubine and a slave to vent the lust of white men. Imah also realized that Mr. Freed had a European woman who he loved more named Helena, and one day when Freed returned to Europe to take leave for 6 months, because it had become a habit system for European men when he returned home, she realized that she would be left behind just like that by Freed. This case proves that the Indies women at that time experienced double confinement they had to face the domination of the invaders and also the snares of patriarchal culture brought by the invading nation.

Imah is a Javanese female worker as a tobacco picker, there is no other choice for her than being a dutch concubine / Nyai. Nyai usually comes from a low indigenous community. They are not in a certain negotiating position or can submit any demands. Many times, they are also found to fall into the hands of soldiers who are also not descendants of the educated group, or who are "appropriate" among Europeans.

Even though official marriages occur, the time is often an act that often occurs. Many terms are used to name a concubine, the most common being the term "nyai". The word *nyai* is adapted from the Balinese and Sundanese languages, and the Javanese language with the meaning "young woman".

As in the part of the dialogue below, Imah will leave Freed's house, because Freed will be coming from Europe:

(1) Imah, my hands stretched out, almost, forming a hug if Unang didn't run out to help me lift my things over Delman. "A kiss for Sinyo and Nona finally I pass a piece of the sentence" and Unang you, hurry up after carrying Nyai "(Banu, 2018:47).

Spivak's converges postcolonial perspectives with Marxist to class differentiating factor. In associating with colonial text, she tries to demonstrate how dominant class ideology resulted in false assumption between colonizers and colonized (Mostafae, 2016). However, Hindian woman is nothing more than a comforting woman. Nyai may be said to have no rights, no rights to his children, no rights to her own position. Every time she can be abandoned by her employer without assistance in any form. Even among the soldiers of a Nyai can be inherited to other soldiers.

The status of the Hindian woman's daily life, she had to maintain her identity as an Hindian and also her status as a Nyai from white men, which later when a legitimate wife from Europe came to the Hindia, that identity would disappear along with the departure of Hindian women from home company.

(2) in fact, I have asked for the whole white kebaya I do not want my wife to see the pile of cloth later in the closet but she refused. Afraid of blaming symbols and status which she now no longer carries the statement like a hard slap on the face makes me think who is a snobbery loser who used to make a strange rule that a 'nyai' must be distinguished in plain view through the color of her shirt (Banu,2018:38).

When Imah will go from her master's house, then all the identities related to the Hindia people must also be brought (maintain his identity), forward later when the European wife comes, she is not the champion of the Dutchman, even though sometimes she wants to rebel why that should be done. There is an element of the Company's dislike of all Indies identity, even including the nickname. The name Imah also had a European call, it is only done because of the Dutch wanted to live in Europe.

(3) *'Imah' I paused for a moment as if I had only realized during this time that I had never called the Dutch name I guess the name she said when she arrived first was indeed more suitable for her than Maria Gerotti Aachenbach (Banu, 2018:38).*

The sadness that hit Imah is felt at that time as Nyai from the Dutch people could not do anything other than just submit and surrender to the Company. In this case, Imah experienced double violence against her because on the other hand she had to face reality as a colonized native who had to submit and she also faced the reality of patriarchal culture and thick male-female domination at that time, as shown in the following dialog:

(4) *Imah listen, "Yes, master" answered softly in Malay language, on her face sadness was carved clearly even though I tried to hide once again I did not dump you, you are still a family member bite the base of the cigar then I wrap it with a match (Banu, 2018:38)*

The consequences of this consideration to difference is Spivak focus on the female subaltern. She argues, "In the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow (Mostafae, 2016). Looking right in the dialogue over the powerlessness of facing the reality that she felt. Its existence is nothing but as a consolation for the colonizers who even in time will do something unnatural like acts of violence and the like that. One should not be treated with respect in the culture of concubines at that time. Nyai must really be aware of his position in the house.

The female sub-alternative in this matter is Imah as an Hindian woman who is psychologically confined to the needs of the Dutch 'master' when she is her mistress and also the condition of being expelled from when the official wife of Europe will go to the Indies. The Indies woman is only able to accept what will happen to her.

At that time she is fully aware of his position that at one point he would be treated as such when his wife from Europe came Imah had to go from that place forever, but her condition at that time could not do anything, even to speak she could not, all she could do is accept all the conditions that happened to her, this is the condition of the Hindia woman's subaltern which generally occurred during Dutch colonialism. The following is a quote from Freed's dialogue which invites to marry Hellena:

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(5) *Annake, I said, I want you to witness my question to hellena again, what question? Almost simultaneously, Annake and Hellena turned to me crawling near Hellena I picked up the tip of her palm slowly married me Len? (Banu, 2018:45).*

Historically, most patriarchal society by way of legislation have strengthened the male to female control and domination (Zhang, 2016). When compared between Hindia and European women, it is clear that the masters of European colonizers wanted more official status with marriage, namely the Dutch. The Dutch Company did not see it even though it had served its life in the Hindia. The culture of western domination which is very thick as an invading nation and also, they consider honour will be higher if they despise their fellow Europeans.

(6) *Imah went first, sir, the woman in front of me got up from sitting, grabbing his belongings, his body movements look like me, like the border between going quickly or staying in place (Banu, 2018:46).*

The colonial domination that is very strong made the Hindian population do nothing. Especially women who experienced double helplessness applied by colonial colonists, psychologically women experienced subalterns, even though violence experienced undisclosed. The helplessness of women towards colonial domination that strongly made Indies women confined to their lives.

IV. CONCLUSION

The conclusion that can be described from this analysis is that the Iksaka Banu tries to describe the life of the Hindian women caused by the influence of the patriarchy culture brought by the colonial people and the dominance of strong colonialism which makes women powerless about themselves, the environment and circumstances. Hindian women experience psychological misery because who are treated as who wish, without clear status by colonial men.

Analysis of "Racun Untuk Tuan" short story that became a subaltern to women was the male side of the Dutch colonizers. Hindian women are used as concubines or Nyai as entertainers while in colonies, even women are not only used as an outlet for the occupiers' sexual lust at that time. Even worse, Hindian women experience physical and psychological pressure due to the treatment of domination by the invaders and the dominance of male culture against women

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