



Discrimination of Women in Modern Javanese Novels

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Abstract. Discrimination often occurs against women. Discrimination against women is reflected in Javanese novels as well. Through feminist literary criticism, this paper is focused on describing the problem of how discrimination is experienced by women and how women try to fight this discrimination. The analysis of these two problems uses a qualitative approach. Sources of research data are novels published between 2011 and 2020. Data collection was obtained through library studies, both text and context data. Data analysis using content analysis. The results of the analysis show that there are two discriminations experienced by women, namely sexual harassment and women's subordination. Both discriminations are motivated by the existence of a patriarchal culture that causes injustice to women. The resistance was carried out by women by: first, against physical and verbal sexual harassment. Second, fight the existing stereotypes by doing things that will be change the stereotypes. Women experienced this remodeled domestication by going out of town to earn a living.

Keywords: Discrimination · Gender inequality · Stereotype · Javanese novel

1 Introduction

Culture is the result of people's thoughts and agreements that are produced through continuous habits, for example: customs, language, arts and traditions. Thus, cultural value is a concept about something that is in the minds of some people and is interpreted in an important way. So it has a function as a guideline or standardization. Patriarchy is one of the cultures that exist in society. Patriarchal culture has existed for a long time and is difficult to eliminate. Because patriarchy is considered as a system of social structure and practice. Walby [1] defines patriarchy as a social system and practices that position men as dominating, oppressing and exploiting women. Thus, it is undeniable that the existence of patriarchy can cause problems of gender inequality.

The existence of gender inequality creates problems that further corner the position of women. Women are discriminated against and even considered as others. Patriarchal

culture also has the view that women are in control of men. Public space is considered a male space, while women only occupy domestic space. The problems faced by these women are also reflected in literary works, namely Javanese novels, especially the following three Javanese novels, *Mulih Ndesa* by Suryadi W.S [2], *Tante Haryati* by JFX Hoery [3], and *Sumi* by Tiwiek S.A. [4]. The three novels depict women who experience discrimination. By using feminism theory and qualitative descriptive method, the forms of discrimination against women will be described in this research.

The issue of discrimination against women will be discussed from the point of view of feminism. Feminist literary criticism is a literary study that leads to the analysis of women. Humm in Wiyatmi [5] defines feminism as an ideology of women's liberation with the belief that women experience injustice because of their gender. Therefore, feminism is here to provide various analyzes of the causes, who are the perpetrators of the oppression of women. Ratna [6] gives her opinion that feminism is more associated with ways of understanding literary works, both in terms of the production and reception processes. It can be concluded that feminism is a movement that aims to fight for the rights and interests of women because women experience injustice. The concept of feminism is highly utilized in literary criticism. According to Wiyatmi [5] feminist literary criticism is a type of literary criticism that is based on feminist thinking that wants justice in viewing the existence of women both as writers and in their literary works. Feminist literary criticism focuses more on women's problems such as gender inequality, women's violence and women's discrimination.

According to Theodorson & Teodhorsnon in Danandjaja [7], discrimination is defined as unequal treatment of individuals or groups based on something, usually categorical or distinctive attributes, such as based on race, ethnicity, religion, or membership of social classes. Therefore, it can be said that discrimination is an unequal act of the majority or which is considered dominant to the minority or the non-dominant. Treatment that discriminates between individuals and groups is due to a difference. Forms of discrimination can be in the form of sexual harassment, restrictions on public spaces, restrictions on the right to education, exclusion and others. Furthermore, it is associated with the context of feminism, discrimination is more defined as an unpleasant treatment of women based on the patriarchal belief that women have undesirable attributes.

2 Method

2.1 Forms of Discrimination

Discrimination against women exists because of a patriarchal culture that considers men as powerful and dominating. Thus, women inevitably experience other forms of discrimination. Discrimination is clearly illustrated in Javanese literary works. The following is an analysis of the forms of discrimination against women represented in Javanese novels.

2.1.1 Sexual Harassment

According to Fakhri [10] sexual harassment is a type of hidden violence (molestation) where a man holds a woman's body in various ways without the consent of the owner

of the body. However, sexual harassment is not only what happens through touch, but can also be through verbal or even fantasy to visualization such as sexual harassment which is usually called “unwanted attention from women”. Although sometimes sexual harassment is normalized and sometimes the victim is blamed. The author provides an overview of women’s discrimination in the form of sexual harassment. Women are used as sexual objects. As in Sumi’s novel,

...tangane kumlawe nyuwel dhadha kang wiwit mentheg kuwi. “Dhadhamu thik kuning men ta mi...” (His hands indecently pinched the chest that was starting to bigger. “You have a nice chest, Mi...”).

Sumi njerit karo nampel tangan cluthak kasebut. Sing duwe tangan mung njengigis ora rumangsa luput.” (*Sumi shouted while hitting the indecent hand. While the man who has the hand just smiled mischievously without feeling guilty*) [4].

The quote shows how a male character named Sidin touches Sumi’s chest, a teenage girl who wants to go take a shower. The male characters openly show their lust for female breasts. Then sexual harassment by squeezing the female character’s chest. The man who can’t contain his passion is very visible in the narrative, the female character can’t rebel because the action is very fast and sudden. The female character tries to fend off the male character’s hand hoping that he will realize that women do not like this action. But the man showed no regrets about his actions.

Sexual harassment also occurs in the novel Muli Ndesa, as can be seen in the following quote:

“...sing ana mung aku lan kowe Santi, ora ketang sacecepan rilana aku nyecep madumu”. (It’s just me and you, Santi. Even for a moment, let me suck your sweet honey. Hope you understand what I mean, Santi. My beauty).

Marsanti pancen ngerti, sakala mak gleger! Ana swara jumlegur ing ruwangan dhadhane Marsanti, kang mung bisa dirungu dening Marsanti dhewe. Kasusul swarane perang tandhing antarane kekuwatan loro kang padha rosane, antarane sendika lan suwala, antarane nglanggati lan nglungani, antarane nuruti lan nulak”. [2] (Marsanti did understand, suddenly her chest trembled). His chest was pounding hard. Only Marsanti heard. Followed by a difficult choice between accepting or rejecting, between obeying or ignoring).

In the quote explained that a male character named Pak Jolang is a figure who helps Marsanti’s life who needs work and free-living expenses. Pak Jolang uses his kindness as power and control over Marsanti. He was forced to serve his lust. This includes sexual harassment because there is an element of coercion on women. Then it is clear how the dominance of men in power plays a role in these sexual harassment acts.

In the novel Tante Haryati also provides an overview of sexual harassment against women. This is illustrated in the following quote.

“Haryati wis dakwenahi dhuwit sakyuta limangatus ewu rupiah, marga kandhane kowe isi prawan tenan”. (I have given Haryati one million five hundred thousand rupiah, because the information is that you are still a real virgin).

“Dadi aku iki didol menyang Singkek?”, *pambengoke Maryani karo mentheleng*. (So, I was sold to Singkek (Javanese people call people of Chinese descent)? shouted Maryani, glaring.)

“Pokoke kowe bengi iki kudu ngladeni aku. Kowe wis dadi hakku, marga wis daktuku’. Om Hendra terus nguyak Maryani sing tansah aling-alingan meja utawa kursi amrih ora kecekel.” (“By the way you have to serve me tonight. You’re already mine, because I’ve bought it.” Om Hendra continued to chase Maryani, who tried to escape by taking cover behind the table so she wouldn’t be caught.) [3].

This quote clearly shows how women are made sex slaves. Maryani’s character is tricked by her friend and sold as a female commercial sex worker to Om Hendra, a middle-aged Chinese man. In the quote, the female character does not know that she has been sold. On the other hand, it shows that women are considered as sexual objects. Women are used as a means of satisfying the lusts of male characters.

The analysis of the quotations from the three novels above shows that there is sexual harassment by men to women. The characters Sumi, Marsanti and Haryati are women victims of sexual harassment with different cases. Sumi and Marsanti received sexual harassment treatment by the perpetrator who did this knowingly. Meanwhile, Haryati’s character gets sexual harassment from a male character who is drunk. Men who sexually harass both consciously and unconsciously will not change or justify these despicable acts. Women are seen as sexual objects of men. The three perpetrators of sexual harassment against the three women above did not show any guilt or remorse. This is because men feel they have more power over women. This shows the subordination of women.

2.1.2 Women Subordination

Subordination is an assessment or assumption that the roles performed by one sex are inferior to the other. Men are considered the most dominant, while women are considered the other. In the end, women are marginalized. According to Fakhri [10] subordination exists because gender occurs in all different forms from place to place and from time to time. Thus, subordination can be interpreted as everything that is less important and has a second position. This is seen as injustice. Women who experience subordination are always considered marginal, belittled and even only considered as complements.

“Haryati dakwenehi dhuwit sakyuta limangatus ewu rupiah, merga kandhane kowe isih prawan. Wis ta, yen ngono tenan, mengko kowe daktambahi maneh. Njaluk pira kowe, tak turuti?” (“... Haryati, I have given you one million five hundred thousand rupiah, because you are still a virgin. That’s enough. If that’s the case, I’ll definitely give you more money.”).

“Kowe aja ngambeg, nuruta bae perkara pepinginanmu dadi penyanyi, iku klebu mburi. Menyang Jakarta iki butuhmu rak golek dhuwit sing akeh ta?” (“Don’t be angry, just obey. Your desire to be a singer, we’ll talk about it later. You came to Jakarta to earn a lot of money, didn’t you?”) [3].

In the quote from Tante Haryati’s novel, it can be seen how the position of women is very marginalized. It is considered as second sex and has no value. It appears that Maryati’s character because she was still a virgin was sold to a masher. Maryati are considered as merchandise. This is a degrading treatment for women. The positioning of women lies in a quote from Sumi’s novel.

“Aku sok nggawa wadon nakal neng omah iki. Aku nggawani wadon iku mung tuntutan biologis. Tuntutan nafsu babarpisan ora ana dhasar katresnan. Hla yen rabi maneh iku butuh katresnan”. (“Sometime, I bring bad girls to this house. I brought these

women only to fulfill biological needs. Only based on lust, no love. If you remarry, you need love”) [4].

Based on the quote shows that women are considered as a complement even just to meet the biological needs of men. Women are considered only as a gratification of lust. This shows that women are inferior. Women are considered to only have a domestic sphere in their lives. About satisfying men in bed.

“*Nanging kena apa kudu kowe sing nurut dheweke. Kowe ki wong lanang. Kudune rak wong wadon sing kudu nurut wong lanang.*” (“But why should you obey him? You are a man. It should be a woman who is obedient to a man”) [2].

In the quote from the *Mulih Ndesa* novel, it can be seen how women are considered as other. Women are considered unimportant. All decisions are in the hands of men. Male domination has always been upheld. This is evident in the subordination of women.

The discussion shows how the problems of men’s views and treatment of women are expressed in detail, especially regarding the subordination of women. As is well known, this subordination is a form of oppression and an act of belittling the existence of women. Women in these novels are seen as inferior to men. Regarded as a gratification of lust only. Even through the stereotypes that have been created, women away from home for 3 days have a bad image. Considered a woman selling herself. This resulted in the existence of women into a crisis.

2.2 Women’s Efforts Against Discrimination

Women’s resistance to discrimination is a form of awareness of the gender injustice they experience. The gender injustice experienced by women in Javanese novels is caused by a patriarchal culture. Society perpetuates this construction by always placing women in the second position and giving stereotypes that are not balanced with men. The placement of women in the second position is not due to nature but a social construction that is believed, agreed upon and carried out continuously. So, it is not wrong when women fight against this injustice.

2.2.1 Combating Physical and Verbal Sexual Harassment

The female characters in these Javanese novels provide verbal and physical resistance to the sexual harassment that happened to them. The resistance is based on the awareness that what the male characters do can harm and corner women. The resistance is not only an effort to avoid acts of harassment, but women also maintain their dignity and existence. For example, as in the quote from Tante Haryati’s novel below.

“*Kesadharane Maryani isih waras, eling nalika sekolah dheweke uga diwulang bela diri karo Pak Yitno, guru olah ragane. Dheweke ngumpulake tanaga, tangane nggegem ngetokake karosan, nyikut wetenge om Hendra, kang ndadekake panyikepe uwal.*” (“Maryani still has awareness, remembers when she was taught martial arts in school by Mr. Yitno, a sports teacher. She gathered strength, her hands clenched into fists, releasing strength, pushing Om Hendra’s stomach with her elbows. The man lost his balance”) [3].

The quote shows Maryani’s character using her physical strength to escape an attempted rape. With the martial arts skills he learned at school, Marsani was able to

escape the rape attempt. In this case, the female characters make efforts to balance with the males by equipping themselves with martial arts skills. Courage to fight is needed by women in facing various forms of discrimination. The courage to give resistance can be seen in a quote from the novel *Sumi* [4].

“Kok wengi men ta Sum. Yuh takterne. Mbalik wis ra ana uwong lho!” Semantane Sidin cengengan. Mripate pencilakan nalika nyawang dhadhane Sumi kang kuning murusuh. Dhadha sing wiwit katon mentheg! (“You came home too late, Sum. Come on, I’ll deliver. There’s no one anymore.” Sidin replied with a mischievous smile. His eyes darted when he saw Sumi’s chest. The chest is starting to look full.)

“Orak! Aku wis wani ijen”. *Wangsulane Sumi sumengit karo bablas.* (“Not! I’ve dared to be alone, Sumi replied angrily and walked quickly) [4].

In the quote above, verbal resistance is carried out by a female character named Sumi. A male character named Sidin harasses Sumi by offering to accompany her to take a bath. The female character firmly refuses the invitation of the male character, Sidin. Women try to take care of themselves in any way they can. Unlike the two novels above, the female character in the novel *Mulih Ndesa* [2] gives resistance to men who have taken their virginity by betraying them. This can be seen in the following quote.

“Manungsa pancen darbe watak angkara, klebu Marsanti. Sanadyan simpenane wis milyaran, nanging isih kepengin luwih akeh maneh. Mula dheweke kepengin ngadani usaha liya. Aku iki wis kecemplung kali. Kebacut kecemplung kali, sandhanganku kebes awakku teles. Geneya aku kudu wedi banyu? Aku pengen dadi tukang pijet panggihan. Marsanti dadi wanita simpenan ngrangkep wanita panggihan.” (“Humans do have an evil character, including Marsanti. Although the savings have reached billions, but still want to add more. So, she wanted to set up another business. “I continued to fall in the river, my clothes and body were all wet. Why should I be afraid of water? I want to be a call woman.” Marsanti becomes a mistress and also a call woman) [2].

The quote tells that it is a woman who has given herself acceptance of what she has experienced. Losing her virginity by the old man who had paid for her life she thought was selfless. The man intimidated and dominated Marsanti’s character. The strong dominance of a male character named Pak Jolang in his life was able to make Marsanti forced to give up her virginity. The female character is unable to resist this domination, so she chooses to betray the male as her way to fight it. Marsanti chose to become a massage therapist in this case as a commercial sex worker. Of course, this was done without Pak Jolang knowing.

2.2.2 Fighting Stereotypes as a Way of Fighting Subordination

In society, stereotypes are often distinguished between men and women. According to Reevy and Maslach [11], male stereotypes are strong and active while women are passive and weak. Men are depicted as strong figures while women are depicted as weak figures. The following is a depiction of women in the novel who are against the stereotypes created by the society.

“Iku Sekarwangi, prawan kembang desa kang dadi kembang lambe ing desane, merga ayune kimplah-kimplah ngebaki tlatah ngare Klaten kang ijo subur einajang kali-kali kinampung gunung-gunung. Emane, sawise lulus SMK prawan kembang desa iku peksa oncat saka desane, lunga bara menyang Jakarta sing kondhange jare akeh

dhuwit abang mabul-mabul gampang dicathoki." ("That's Sekarwangi, the most beautiful girl who became a conversation in her village, because of her beauty that adorns the fertile Klaten area and is surrounded by mountains. Unfortunately, after graduating from vocational school, this beautiful woman left her village for Jakarta, a big city known as a place to make easy money") [2].

In the quote, a female character named Sekarwangi left to migrate to Jakarta after graduating from Vocational High School. The word "emane" shows disappointment, regretting the decision of a female figure who went abroad at a young age. Stereotypes that develop in society require women only in the domestic sphere. So that women who go to work let alone migrate are considered unusual and violate convention.

"Sumi ing wektu esuk kuwi. Sanajan dhuwit sitheng-goweng babarpisan ora nyekel, parandene meksa nekad munggah ing bis sing siyaga budhal menyang Surabaya. Babar pisan ora kepikir, kepriye yen kondhekture bis narik karcis. Sedheng tuwuhing pepinginan menyang Surabaya iku ya bareng weruh bis mandheg ing ngarepe. Diwaca, jurusan Surabaya. Langsung munggah ngono bae. Budhal saka ngomah hora nduwe tujuwan. Butuhe lunga sokur bage ing paran oleh dhuwit kanggo ngejogi dhendhan." (Sumi still went to Surabaya even though she had no money. She was determined to go to the bus that was ready to go. Sumi doesn't think that the bus conductor will ask for the road fare. Suddenly, Sumi's desire appeared when she saw the bus stop in front of her. Sumi reads the Surabaya major. Just go up. Sumi has no purpose. The woman just left and it was a fortune to get money to pay the fine) [4].

The statement proves that women are able to fight the stereotype that women are weak. In the novel, women show that they are not weak, but just as strong as men. Sumi's character is desperate to go to Surabaya to earn money to pay for her schooling. It can be seen how women try to enter the public sphere, one way to become an educated woman. However, Sumi's behavior after deciding to go to the city is seen as a strange thing by the public.

The quote shows how society responds when women fight against their stereotypes. They are considered strange and are supported by mistakes that violate customs. But this was ignored by Sumi. Although she knows that the growing stereotype shows that if a woman leaves the house without saying goodbye, she will be seen as a bad girl who sells herself. This can be seen in the following quote.

"Atine wis gilig, tekade wis mantep. Wis ora malang molih. Arep ninggalake bumi kelairane, ninggalake bapak ibu lan adhi-adhine, ninggalake kanca-lancane, ninggalake jejibahane ing desane kang sasuwene iki diantepi. Kabeh ditinggalake, budhal menyang Jakarta adu nasib ngoyak gegayuhan. Sangu nekad nyangking bakat." (Her determination was unanimous, there was no hesitation. Shee will leave the earth of her birth, her parents, her younger siblings, her friends, her responsibilities in the village that she has carried out so far. All left behind, went to Jakarta, tried her luck, pursued the dreams, armed with determination and talent) [3].

Similar to the women in the novels Sumi and Mulih Desa, the women in the novel Tante Haryati also destroy the stereotypes that develop in society. She fights stereotypes by trying to enter the public sphere. Women working by migrating to Jakarta are women's choices and also as an effort to realize the recognition of their existence on an equal footing with men in the public sphere.

The resistance that women do in these novels is a form of resistance to sexual harassment and subordination. Constructions formed by the community, patriarchal culture are already attached and difficult to remove. Women who experience discrimination because of the patriarchal culture make efforts to fight it using their own methods.

3 Conclusion

The discussion describes the discrimination problems experienced by female characters in the novels *Sumi*, *Mulih Desa*, and *Tante Haryati*. Discrimination is created because of the existence of gender inequality that comes from the patriarchal culture that has long been constructed by the Javanese people. The patriarchal construction produces an unequal space for movement between men and women. In these novels, women get sexual harassment and subordination. Male domination positions women as a weak and oppressed second class.

Women's awareness of the discrimination they receive creates resistance. Women's resistance to sexual harassment was found to have two actions. First, verbal resistance and physical resistance. Verbal resistance appears when women immediately refuse to serve men's lust because women really uphold their self-esteem. Second, physical resistance is carried out by women, by entering the public sphere by equipping themselves with education and mastering martial arts. Self-defense activities that are usually done by men. In this novel, women also show that they are able to do the same thing. Resistance to sexual harassment is slightly different in the novel *Mulih Ndesa* (2018). The woman is able to fight back by betraying the man by becoming a call massager and commercial sex worker. Another resistance is done by fighting the stereotype by overhauling the stereotype itself. Women who are stereotyped as weak and attached to the domestic sphere can be changed. Women are desperate to leave the house with the capital of expertise, in this case what is found in these novels is cooking and singing.

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