

Kartini and The Feminism Thinking in Javanese Nobles Women (Women Priyayi)

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Abstract—*The beginning of the 20th century was the opening of Dutch European schools to Javanese nobles. It allowed the Javanese priyayi children to receive a European education. Education allows the transformation of European ideas to spread to the east. Freedom and independence are one of Europe's most influential ideas on the native nation. Kartini's awareness of the oppression of Javanese noble women (called: women priyayi) brought rebellion against women's social position. Kartini sued the shackles of Javanese feudal culture and demanded women's freedom and independence. Women's voices should be heard, women should be freed to choose their life and should be educated. Women's progress can only be gained through education. And education is also liberating and placing women on a par with men. The "feminist" thought that emerged in the midst of the patriarchal feudal culture of Javanese society was a form of Kartini's rebellion over the social position of the marginalized Javanese women.*

Keyword: *Javanese Nobles Women, Feminism, Kartini, Freedom and Independent.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Long before the Ethical Policy was imposed on Java, Kartini, a Javanese priyayi woman, had thought about it, then made an effort to improve the social position of Javanese women [1]. When through the seclusion, Kartini realized that the only way to improve the standard of living of indigenous people is education. But what Kartini's power is only the daughter of a *bupati*. Whatever Kartini did and did not do much to help the natives, because the highest authority was in the hands of the Dutch colonial government. Kartini undertook various approaches to Dutch officials in his effort to obtain a permit to establish a school for indigenous children.

The Government Regulation of 1863 obliged the Governor-General to create conditions that allow the native population to enjoy education. Nevertheless, the opportunity was widely enjoyed by the indigenous population when Frans van de Putte Minister of the Colonies raised the education budget in 1863. The opening of education for the natives was greeted by Kartini with joy. Because of Europe's acceptable education from childhood, Kartini was very critical of the social environment and the Dutch colonial

government's arbitrary policy toward indigenous people. The critical attitude is increasingly seen since Kartini had the opportunity to send letters with the Europeans (Dutch) beginning with Stella H. Zeehandelaar in May 1899. Mid-year 1899 was an important year as a sign of the development of Kartini thought that crossed with the thinking of Europeans.

Kartini pen friends, in general, have a high education and have a high social standing in Dutch society at that time. Not only is Kartini's best friend, Kartini's female friends are also highly educated and have the least influence in the field of information and communication in Dutch society. When compared with Kartini who only graduate European elementary school with age still 20 years. But in Kartini's letters it appears that although Kartini was only a graduate of European elementary school, she was able to balance the thoughts of her Dutch friends.

In a work containing a collection of Kartini letters compiled by Mr. Abendanon, *Door Duisten tot Licht* there are ten correspondence addresses and more than half are women [2]. Psychologically it is not surprising that a young woman who grows up like Kartini tends to be freer to share her problems, feelings, suffering, and thoughts to fellow women. Kartini's critical thinking about her nation is not only the result of Kartini's observations and experiences but also the result of Kartini's dialogue with her pen-in friends and those whom Kartini considers being invited to exchange ideas about her ideas. Kartini read a lot of reading books that come from Europe (Netherlands) which mostly contains the state of Europe and European society. While with pen friends - mostly women - Kartini often discusses differences in social position and women's rights. So it can be said that Kartini thinking about the role and social status of women in the Dutch East Indies get the influence of European thinking from European women to pen pal Kartini.

The results of the research with the theme of Kartini thinking include the thesis of Herlyn Djunina [3] which compares the representation of women in a paper like Rubric Tapale'uk. The results showed that the representation of women in Rubric Tapale'uk is as a figure of wife and housewife. But furthermore, every writer in this Tapale'uk Rubric presents a different representation of housewives. Male writers tend to represent women, not as central figures in the text, women are often only used as a "complementary spice". While female authors use text more to represent the figure of a smart housewife. The figure is not only limited to

housekeepers but a central figure who is critical of social problems, dare to break the patriarchal culture with ideas that are not less than men.

The second work is the dissertation of Dri Arbaningsih Soeleiman [4]. The study in the work is a philosophy of women's emancipation based on Kartini's letters and notes. The results showed 1. Kartini struggle free people from the suffering due to colonial Dutch colonial unfair social; 2. Kartini's struggle to liberate women; 3. Kartini's concern about injustice over the government's treatment of Javanese employees over Dutch employees who work for the Governor's Government and question their moral obligations to the Javanese people; 4. Kartini education philosophy.

The third work is the writing of Khoiril Faizain [5]. It contains the differences between feminism and the women's movement. The term feminism is used to interpret the movement of women who intend to liberate women from everything that curbs the freedom of women, one of which is male domination in European society and Islamic society. While the term women's movement was deliberately chosen to interpret the movement of women who tend to criticize and even reject the feminist movement. In that work, Faizain intended to straighten the movement of feminism which is considered as the entrance to the condition of the domination of men that result in inequality and injustice for women. Feminism thrives in Europe, but if applied in Islamic society feminism actually get a lawsuit from the women's movement because it is considered too free and can even harm women themselves. The solution is between men and women should not consider the issue of gender relations that is understood as a feud between groups but from the perspective of cooperation and mutual relationships with each other. Movement of Muslim gender fighters needs to be cautious and wiser in expressing ideas and agenda. So as not to impress selling European ideas that are not necessarily suitable to be applied, can even be contrary to Islamic values.

The research works have not clearly shown feminism in Kartini's thinking. Further searching of Kartini letters is needed to explore Kartini's thoughts.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

A. Methods used in this study is a method of historical research with heuristic steps, criticism, inter-retention and historiography. Heuristics or source search yields book findings *Door Duisternis tot Licht: Gedachten over en vor Javaansche volk van Raden Adjeng Kartini is a collection of Kartini letters* collected by JH Abendanon and Allard Elizabeth and published 1976. Newspapers and periodicals were obtained from krantendelpher.nl namely *Kleine Courant*, *De Telegraaf*, and *Java Bode*.

Criticism of the source of information sorting activities based on predetermined categories of indicators. The main function of criticism is to examine the validity of existing information by benchmarking with the corresponding information on various sources. This activity will produce historical fact that will be the framework of historical construction.

B. Interpretation stage is an analysis activity conducted with the help of theory to prove hypothesis or argumentation. Interpretation is a theoretical meaning. The theory of feminism demands the existence of social equality between men and women especially in the equality of economic rights and political rights for women. The underlying argument is that women can claim equality with men on the basis of human nature as moral, intelligent, thinking, and reasoning beings that gender inequality are the result of sexist and patriarchal patterns [6].

The relationship between facts is built on the analysis. This stage is called historiography. Historiography is intended to construct Kartini feminist thought in terms of the role and social status of Javanese women.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Kartini's thoughts about marriage

In Kartini's letters, both addressed to Stella and Mrs. Abendanon especially touched on the position of women in the family, especially to the Javanese noble families. The letters contain Kartini's opinion about women's position, especially wife in relation with husband. Kartini personally strongly opposed the subordinate position of women in the Javanese aristocratic family even though he did not manage to get out of the shackles of that culture. Marriage is the main focus of his struggle to "liberate" women. Kartini strongly opposed the marriage that was mated (something common among the Javanese nobility). Kartini argues that women's voices should be heard when they will be married. A thing that never happened at that time.

Her thoughts about the "freedom" of women to determine her life partner much poured in her letters to Mrs. Abendanon. Kartini's letters openly expressed her thoughts about the position of women in the affairs of marriage. His disapproval of the arranged marriage was written in his letter to Mrs. Abendanon dated October 7, 1900. Kartini expressly declared that she would accept her match even though "her mind was boiling and raging" but she also said that she was a man with a mind and head that could think and feel. The phrase indicates that although Kartini cannot refuse the will of her parents in the end, Kartini will "bow" so that her freedom of thought is shackled.

Kartini also rejected polygamy. The rejection was very strict and loud. Kartini in the same letter stating firmly will not marry. Emotionally Kartini describes her anger over it when commenting on the marriage of a single grandson of the Priangan Regent who is educated, educated and wealthy but married to a man who has suffered three. Kartini's spotlight, in this case, is directed at the three previous wives of the Bupati. Kartini questioned how the feelings of the previous wives, Kartini can feel the discomfort because her own mother also experienced the same thing. For Kartini, it is an affront to women and must be terminated. That is what is so desirable as stated in the letter "there is nothing that I really desire and desirable except to be allowed to stand alone"[7].

Kartini's rejection of polygamy is emphatically and emotionally embodied in his letter to Stella dated November

6, 1899. Kartini calls polygamy a sin because it has hurt humans. Kartini mentions all the actions that cause human suffering is a sin. In this case, Kartini describes that women have no right, all the rights of men. A man may take another woman as a legal wife into his wife and children's house, while the wife must accept her "rival woman". Therefore Kartini opposes marriage which is regulated in Javanese law and teachings.

Kartini is fully aware that her thoughts will not be accepted by her community. The Javanese noble society with the feudal-patriarchal culture certainly will not accept the thought. Marriage for noble girls or Javanese *prijajis* is governed and determined by the family. The *priyayi* girl is not allowed to choose her own husband. The male upper-class hegemony among Javanese *prijajis* acquired the legitimacy of social, religious, state, and inherited values from generation to generation. That's what causes gender-biased behavior.

The strong dominance of patriarchal culture is realized by Kartini. In his letter, Kartini states that what he initiated is not easy. The road to which he will go is difficult, full of obstacles and obstacles. Kartini realizes that because she is fighting herself she will never get to the end of the road. However Kartini states, at least he has made a way for others, he has made his way through not perfect. In his letter he states "... I helped to help the road leading to freedom and freedom for women".

The strong reason Kartini really wanted freedom and indigenous women's independence was the suffering of women she witnessed in the *priyayi* environment. Kartini uses the phrase "hell" to describe the life of a mother, herself and her sister in the *priyayi* environment. Kartini's father Jepara Regent has two wives Raden Ayu and mother Kartini. Kartini witnessed how her mother was treated as a messenger who had to take care of her own children and her stepchildren. Kartini felt how Raden Ayu's treatment of her and her brothers, felt distinguished and felt unloved. Kartini does not blame Raden Ayu who hates her, in her letter Kartini describes how she always tried to take Raden Ayu's heart for her mother. In her letters, Kartini states that his love and love for his father made him survive. Kartini describes her father as a loving person and always grants the request of her children, even her daughter. The only one that can not be granted is freedom. That reason reinforced Kartini's determination to fight for freedom and equal rights.

B. Kartini's thoughts on women's social position

In *priyayi* society, the value of a woman is more attached to the household while the male control is overwhelming for female sexuality and movement. Women's movement is increasingly restricted when the position of husband or father is higher. That's because the Javanese *priyayi* are not economic oriented, but the rank and position of the husband or father of a Javanese *priyayi* woman.

In a Javanese society that embraces the patriarchal culture, men are positioned superior to women in various sectors of life, both public and domestic sectors. In the social and political sphere, the role of women is very small. The image of women in Javanese *priyayi* culture is owned by men who are often described as *griyo* (house), *bondho*

(treasure), *turonggo* (vehicle), *kukilo* (bird or pet) and *pusoko* (weapon / supernatural powers). Mastery of women is a symbol of a man's powers. Conversely, the submission, dependency, and resignation of women over men is a glorious picture of Javanese women's hearts. While the ideal Javanese male concept is to have bumps (money) and bumps (sexual virility) [8]. That is why when a girl has menstruated or reaches the age of 12, he must undergo seclusion (isolated in the house) until a man arrives as a prospective husband.

Freedom as a daughter stops since entering adolescence. In the seclusion of the world, Javanese *priyayi* women are home to families, especially women and female assistants. Girls are not allowed to go out except for their father's permission and accompanied by relatives or helpers. Javanese *priyayi* women also will not meet and accompany guests unless called and allowed by their father.

Women's helplessness due to the social and cultural structure is described by Kartini in her letter to madam Abendanon August 1900. The loss of freedom and isolation from the outside world made Kartini very sad. Deep grief poured on the letter. Kartini was very conscious of her academic ability and had an aspiration to study in the Netherlands but she also realized that it was impossible. Despite knowing that the period of freedom was over, Kartini sought permission from her father to make exceptions because of the support and encouragement of his Dutch teachers and friends. Her father firmly rejected Kartini's wish.

Kartini's disappointment with women's social position is poured into her letter with emotion. In his letter, he stated that due to the long treatment of male power made women no longer see oppression and injustice but with surrender and acceptance accepted as a natural right. In this case, the conditions that make Kartini trying to fight. Kartini openly declared that she was not able to resist the power, not only because of the strong cultural customs but also because women themselves supported it. Kartini cited the strong dominance of the man as "lived by the stupidity of women".

Women must be freed from ignorance and the way only through education. Kartini education will form "spirit and soul" so that education is not only about intellect but also character or character. Kartini emphasizes more on education for women because she thinks women are not only a supporter of a civilization but because women carry the influence of human quality. From human women receive the earliest education, learn to talk, learn to feel, learn to think and learn all life. With that Kartini questioned how mothers can educate their children if they are not educated.

Kartini's thoughts about the equality of men and women are written in her letter to Mrs. Abendannon dated September 30, 1901. According to Kartini, young men and women must be related. Individually the youth can do a thing to improve the degree and advance the native nation. But if these young people can unite their goals and strengths then the results will be greater. Kartini in the letter uses the phrase "unite us strong and powerful". The phrase indicates Kartini's desire to change the social condition of the Javanese who became his concern.

Invoicing freedom and equality Kartini always try to find support from the educated circles both native and

Dutch. Kartini actively corresponds with the Dutch people who have the same thoughts and is expected to support the realization of his dream. In addition to the Abendannon couple, Kartini exchanges ideas and tries to "talk" to Dutch characters who are perceived to have influenced such as van Col's husband, Governor-General Van Der Wijck, JM Pijnacker, Van Overveldt and editorial chiefs of several Dutch newspapers led primarily by women. Kartini's thoughts and perceptions succeeded in drawing sympathy and support from them but to realize the establishment of the girls' school in Java is very difficult. Van Overveldt said that they did not dare to take risks. That is reasonable because the nobles are the backbone of the Dutch bureaucracy. Diversifying the cultural life and social world of the Javanese aristocracy serious problems for the Dutch East Indies government, without their support in the government bureaucracy then the Dutch colonial government over the Dutch East Indies would not survive. Therefore the Dutch as far as possible did not interfere with Javanese cultural affairs, although the Dutch also introduced European thought and culture through established schools. Changes must come from the natives themselves and walk "calmly", therefore colonial rule as much as possible avoids the things that will cause "commotion" among the noble society.

Although Kartini did not succeed in realizing her goal of establishing a government-recognized official school, Kartini succeeded in obtaining a permit to establish a girls school for a limited environment. The school for the girl is established within her home and is reserved for girls in her home environment. The school in addition to teaching reading and writing Latin letters also teach about knowledge keputrian and manners not only Java but also Europe. Together with his sister Roekmini, Kartini runs the school. In his letter to madam Abendannon dated July 7, 1903, Kartini recalled that she and Roekmini had nine students and received many students' requests from among Malays. In that letter, Kartini calls it "a victory!"

IV. CONCLUSION

Kartini thinking can be included in the category of feminist thought. In his day Kartini had thought and initiated the freedom and independence of women in determining the choice of their destiny. Kartini denounced all sorts of cultural customs that treat women unjustly and degrade women. Kartini demanded the granting of freedom and freedom especially in the case of marriage or marriage because it really determines the life of a woman.

For Kartini men and women have the same rights and obligations, no one has a higher position with one another. The relationship between men and women is equality, women not male and male servants should not apply arbitrarily to women. A thought that advanced in his era, especially in the Javanese priyayi environment that embraces the patriarchal feudal culture. Of course, the thought was considered insane and much opposed mainly by priyaji circles, even for that matter Kartini and her like-minded sisters were often exiled.

However, his thinking continues to roll and inspires many Javanese women to dare to show it in public. The

educated women then not only appeared as teachers in women's schools but also had dared to issue periodic publications created and designated for women themselves as the Holy Spirit did. The Indies princess is one of the publications voicing "feminist" thinking and encouraging women to take a more active role, especially in regulated marriages and polygamy. Furthermore, the struggle for women's freedom and equality not only occurred in Java but spread throughout the Indies, especially in areas that already had Dutch European schools. The struggle for women's freedom and equality has finally gained the support of young men and Dutch people. Furthermore, the struggle won recognition from the people of the Indies with the permission of the girls' schools to stand.

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