

The Existence of Javanese Women in The Grip of Patriarchal Culture

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ABSTRACT: This research discusses the efforts of Javanese women to get their existence not only in the domestic sphere, but also in the public sphere. The patriarchal culture causes the confinement of women's movement within the family or community sphere. The Sri Sumarah novel by Umar Kayam is a literary work in the form of a novelet in which there is a story about Javanese women. The method used in this research is qualitative. The data source in this research is the novel Sri Sumarah by Umar Kayam. The theory used in this research is Simone De Beauvoir (1949) using an existentialist feminist approach. The results of this study are that the figures Bawuk, Sri Sumarah, and Tun can show their existence through efforts that can identify themselves in a patriarchal culture. The efforts made by female Javanese figures in the novel Sri Sumarah by Umar Kayam are 1) women can work outside the home, 2) women are intellectuals, and 3) women work to bring about socialist transformation in society.

Keywords: *existence, Javanese Woman, existensialism feminism.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Tong (2018, p. 262) states that women are always subordinated to men. Women seem to be under men, and as a result, men dominate over women. A position or hierarchy also involves differences that are dominated by men and women as subordinates (Bennett & Royle, 2016, p. 152-153). Subordination to women can be improved when women and men are already in the realm of privacy or forming households (Walby, 1990, p. 175).

Living in the grip of a patriarchal culture has resulted in Javanese women having the space to create their own identity. Budiati (2010: 55) reveals that there are rules in social and cultural structures that form the stereotypical views inherent in Javanese women, for example, such as *masak, manak, macak* (means: applying makeup, giving birth, and cooking). This is the result of social construction which results in the position of Javanese women being lower than that of men. In line with Sudarso et al. (2019, p. 8) patriarchal ideology is deeply embedded in Javanese society, even as it has been taught from an early age that men are leaders and women are only complementary or *kanca wingking* (means: a woman who always obeys a man's wishes) for men.

The existence of a patriarchal culture is one of the reasons women find it difficult to get their existence. Fundamentalist society also results in limited women's movement (Sagala, 2017, p.25). They have to obey the rules without knowledge. Handayani & Novianto (2004, p. 3) stated that Javanese women are seen as faces full of oppression. According to him, this is because Javanese culture does not provide attractive opportunities between men and women. Asri (2014, p. 452) reveals that the Javanese woman described as Manguwujaya in the novel *Rara Mendut* has a picture of a beautiful, brave, and rebellious woman. However, they will have no power and can do nothing but themselves the ideology of the patriarch. The patriarchal culture forms a very conspicuous gap or backrest and causes a gender hierarchy (Rokhimah Activist in Mojokerto, East Java et al., 2014, p. 140).

Javanese patriarchal culture has a detrimental impact on women. The concept of a Javanese woman being able to become a *konco wingking* (means: a woman who always obeys a man's wishes) for her husband is one of the problems that cannot be avoided, especially in the household. When a woman is made an object, she will experience objectivity over her body, but when a woman becomes a subject, she benefits herself (Benedicta, 2011, p. 147). This study analyzes the patriarchal culture experienced by Javanese female characters in the novel Sri Sumarah by Umar Kayam and the efforts made by Javanese female characters to show their existence. The researcher used two short stories (Bawuk and Sri Sumarah) contained in the novel. In both short stories, Umar

Kayam presents pictures of Javanese priyayi life and the role of women in Javanese society. The prominent Javanese female characters in the short story are Bawuk, Sri Sumarah, and Tun. The three figures are an illustration of the results of the patriarchal culture in Java. Bawuk and Tun figures who received discrimination in the form of stereotypes because they married communist members. Meanwhile, Sri Sumarah became a single parent and eventually became a massage therapist. Negative labeling and bad treatment from customers make Sri Sumarah a victim of patriarchal culture. This is in line with Ismawati's (2013) research which analyzed the figures of Bawuk and Sri Sumarah regarding cultural transformation, which explains that Javanese women are no longer conco wingking because these two figures can show their active role in the public sphere.

In addition, Lia (2014) revealed in her research on the novel Sri Sumarah by Umar Kayam that the character Sri describes the Javanese people who are *nrimo* and *sumarah* with circumstances. The character of Javanese women who are *nrimo* (means: accept everything) makes women into inferior beings. Nugroho (2019, p. 957) explains that in *Serat Piwulang* it is stated that Nyai Adisara reveals that men are creatures who are considered superior because of the patriarchal culture so that Javanese women experience repression due to pressure. Such social construction places Javanese women in the second class and women serve as complements.

Novel Sri Sumarah by Umar Kayam is a novelet (short novel) one of the works that describes the life of the Javanese people in the era of colonialism. In addition, the novel highlights the life of Javanese women in a patriarchal environment. According to the official website of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Umar Kayam is a writer, humanist, and writer who was born on April 30, 1932 in Ngawi, East Java Province. He is known to the public, one of which is his role as Bung Karno in the big screen film *Pengk betrayal G 30 S PKI*. His works include a novelet (short novel) entitled *Sri Sumarah* (1975), which contains a collection of short stories (*Seribu Kunang-Kunang di Manhattan, Istriku, Madame Schultz, dan Sang Raksasa, Sybil, Secangkir Kopi dan Sepotong Donat, Chief Sitting Bull, There Goes Tatum, Musim Gugur Kembali di Connecticut, Kimono Biru buat Istri, Sri Sumarah, Bawuk*), *Para Priyayi* (1992) and the last *Jalan Menikung* (2002).

Based on the description above, this study discusses the efforts of Javanese female characters in the novel Sri Sumarah by Umar Kayam in dealing with the influence of patriarchal culture. Through the existentialist feminism movement, women's existence began to be recognized, not only within the family, but also in society. Research on the existence of women has previously been carried out by the Ismawati (2018), which discusses the status and role of Javanese women in literary texts. This study compares the descriptions of Javanese women's lives contained in literary texts and the real world. According to this study, there are differences in the status and role of Javanese women between literary texts and real life, especially in dealing with patriarchal culture. In literary texts, Javanese female characters show resistance to patriarchy by carrying out their roles as working women in domestic and public. While in the real world, there is a change in the attitudes and mindset of Javanese women.

The theory used to answer the problems in this research is Simone De Beauvoir's Existentialist theory. De Beauvoir (1949, p. 767) reveals that many women have superior souls and ambitions. Women's thinking like this is not a construction made by her. Women can build themselves not because the essence of femininity can create an identity that is already available. The obstacle for women to build themselves is because of patriarchy. The peak of a woman's freedom towards herself is when she becomes an object and a prey, which means she has to break away from a sovereign subject (De Beauvoir, 1949, p. 815). At least there is a strategy for women to go to transcendence, namely women can become workers, women can become intellectuals, women can work to obtain a socialist transformation of society (De Beauvoir, 1949, p. 848-857).

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a descriptive qualitative research. The data collection technique in this study used a literature study. The data is found by reading literary works. The method of data collection is by quoting and storing it in a record in the form of a digital file on a laptop. After that, the data were analyzed using the content analysis method to find the messages contained in the novel quotes and data. The message studied is a message about the existence of Javanese women. At the data analysis stage, it is done by describing the data unit by giving detailed explanatory notes. After that, the characteristics of each data unit will be found. Furthermore, at the classification stage, similar data will be grouped according to their type or category and data comparisons are carried out. After being compared, the data are interpreted theoretically, to reach a finding or meaning regarding the existence of Javanese women in the stories of Sri Sumarah and Bawuk.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The existence of a patriarchal culture prevents Javanese women from being recognized for their existence. However, it does not merely make women only subject to existing rules. This can be proven by the

actions and efforts of the characters Tun, Bawuk, and Sri Sumarah to bring out their existence as Javanese women.

IV. WOMEN CAN WORKING IN PUBLIC

The meaning of 'women can work' is the activity or work carried out by women in the public sphere. The opportunity to work not only domestically but in the public sphere is what women need. Like when Bawuk and Tun worked to help her husband.

Dari Pak Jogo, Bawuk mendapat tugas menjadi kurir dan mengamati gerak-gerik mahasiswa.

From Mr. Jogo, Bawuk got the job of being a courier and observing student movements.

(...)kata Pak Jogo, Bawuk memiliki kecerdasan serta kesabaran yang diperlukan buat itu semua. Bawuk menuruti penunjukan itu. Dengan patuh diikutinya segala petunjuk yang diberikan Pak Jogo dan kawan-kawannya. Ia diwajibkan bekerja sendiri(Kayam, 2005, hlm. 124).

(...) Mr. Jogo said, Bawuk has the intelligence and patience needed for all of this. Bawuk complied with the appointment. He obediently followed all the instructions given by Mr. Jogo and his friends. He is required to work alone (Kayam, 2005, p. 124).

Bawuk's figure was one of the wives of the PKI gang who wanted to oppose the government. As a result of the rebellion, Bawuk's husband was arrested and he left Bawuk and their children. As a wife, Bawuk is not just silent watching her husband being detained. Bawuk tries to be a courier as well as a spy to monitor student movements. He was trusted by Pak Jogo as the coordinator of the PKI network because of his intelligence and patience in carrying out his actions. (De Beauvoir, 1949, p. 814) argues that when a woman becomes active and productive, they feel they will regain their transcendence. One of the goals of women doing a job is to achieve prosperity (Lancet, 2019, p. 53).

The quote above illustrates that the role of women is not only to function as a mother and a wife, but also to be a worker. One way for women to be free from challenges is by participating in the workspace and demanding recognition for their existence (Yunita, 2017, p. 15). Bawuk tries to survive so that he does not have the same fate as his husband. Despite Bawuk's main goal in doing this work, she tried to prove to PKI members that as a woman she could also participate even though the job was dangerous.

Asri (2014, p. 454) reveals that women are gentle and neat creatures, but do not have intelligence so it is difficult for them to occupy high positions. This perception does not apply to the Bawuk. In the novel Sri Sumarah by Umar Kayam she is described as a Javanese woman from a priyayi who has intelligence and patience in her work so that Pak Jogo believes in her. Javanese women have identical characters such as gentle, calm, do not like conflict, have an economic character, are loyal (Handayani & Novianto, 2004, p. 130). This represents that in Java only then know about women who are equal to men, one of which is in work.

Her role as a working woman makes her have to divide her time between working and taking care of her children. It became a burden for him especially he had to be a mother as well as a father to his children.

Kesibukannya, serta macam pekerjaan yang dibebankan kepadanya yang menuntut begitu banyak waktu serta kegesitan berpikir dan bertindak, tidak banyak memberikan kesempatan baginya untuk banyak merenungkan tentang perkembangan jiwa anak-anaknya (Kayam, 2005, hlm. 125)

His busy life, as well as the kind of work assigned to him that requires so much time and agility to think and act, do not give him much opportunity to reflect much on the mental development of his children (Kayam, 2005, p. 125).

After Bawuk became a career woman, she had to accept the consequences of her role. Bawuk, who was left by her husband, had to take care of her children, so that when Bawuk became a career woman, Bawuk's children were not taken care of. One of the things that made women feel that they did not get equality was the division of labor in the domestic sphere. When a woman wants to be a career woman, she must be hindered because of her role as a mother. According to Beauvoir (in Tong, 2016, p. 270) being a mother and wife can limit her freedom as a woman. Construction injustice against women, especially in the domestic sphere, burdened her. Bawuk's problems also hit Tun when his husband took part in a rebellion which resulted in his wife and children not being able to meet their husband.

Tun ternyata sekarang sangat sibuk. Sekolahnya tidak diteruskan, tetapi dia bekerja membantu suaminya. Katanya di "sekretariat". Sorehari kadang-kadang dia pergi sendiri, kadang-kadang bersama suaminya, kadang-kadang bila pertemuan itu diadakan di rumah, ikut aktif dalam diskusi-diskusi itu (Kayam, 2005, hlm.216).

Tun turned out to be very busy right now. Her schooling was not continued, but she worked to help her husband. He said in the "secretariat". In the evenings she sometimes goes alone, sometimes with her husband, sometimes when the meeting is held at home, actively participates in the discussions (Kayam, 2005, p.216).

The quote illustrates that women can work outside the home. As a woman who did not get the opportunity to get a higher education, it did not make Tun discouraged. He proved that Javanese women are not only in bed, well, in the kitchen, but also can be working women (*kasur, sumur, dapur*). A woman does not want to limit herself because she does not want to mutilate herself (De Beauvoir, 1949). This means that Tun's act of becoming a woman working in the public sphere is a form of effort to achieve freedom of her sexuality role as a woman. The role of women's femininity cannot be avoided in a patriarchal society. This happens when their position in conventional gender emphasizes that married women must be housewives (Pertiwi et al., 2020, p. 27). The peak of women's success is seen when they can carry out their roles as wives and mothers. If women cannot fulfill this role, then they will be considered a failure. Failure is what makes women sometimes cornered as an object.

V. INTELLECTUAL WOMAN

Intellectual activity is an activity in thinking, seeing, and defining. The stereotype attached to women that their way of thinking is irrational causes their opinions to often be ignored. Doctrination that is carried out from an early age if women end up only being the makmum of men also makes it difficult for women to develop their potential. However, the characters Bawuk, Sri, and Tun prove their existence that women can become intellectuals.

Dan kilatan itu ternyata telah berhasil dia tularkan kepada kawan-kawannya, kepada kawan baru mereka di T. Tiap kali Bawuk bersama kawan-kawannya berdiskusi dengan kaum ibu, para istri birokrat desa, dan istri-istri petani-petani, Bawuk melihat kilatan-kilatan mata mereka itu yang jauh berbeda dari stereotip petani-petani, yang selama ini digambarkan sebagai redup dan membosankan (Kayam, 2005, hlm. 120).

And it turned out that he had succeeded in transmitting the flash to his friends, to their new friends in T. Every time Bawuk and his friends discussed with the mothers, the wives of village bureaucrats, and the wives of the farmers, Bawuk saw flashes of light. their eyes are a far cry from the stereotype of farmers, which has been described as dim and boring (Kayam, 2005, p. 120).

Bawuk is the wife of a communist. Although Bawuk did not have a high educational background, he tried to fit into the communist mindset. As the wife of one of the PKI members who was predicted to defend the weak people, she did not find it difficult to adapt. Bawuk, who is actually a Javanese priyayi, did not feel awkward about the situation. He dared to voice his opinion through discussion and took an active role in organizations under the communist leadership. Her husband also did not prevent Bawuk from mingling with members of the organization. On the other hand, Hasan really wanted Bawuk to be able to explore the PKI organization he was participating in.

As a wife and Javanese woman, Bawuk adheres to the term *konco wingking* (means: a woman who always obeys a man's wishes) which means a wife must be her husband's makmum. That is the principle that is held by Bawuk. When her husband became a member of the PKI, Bawuk tried to follow in his husband's footsteps by adjusting to the circle of the organization. Sometimes, Bawuk participates in discussions and leads meetings with her husband. According to Javanese culture, especially in terms of power, women tend to base it on sympathy, concern for others, and a sense of understanding (Toni, 2019, p. 149). This is what made Bawuk able to adapt to the communists because of his sensitivity to others.

VI. WOMEN CAN WORK TO ACHIEVE SOCIALIST TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIETY

One of the things that can make women free from victims of social construction is to become independent women. The stereotype of working women will be reduced when women are able to change people's mindsets. Sri is one of the characters told in the novel *Sri Sumarah* by Umar Kayam as an independent woman.

Di kampungnya dia dipanggil Bu Guru Pijit. Sesungguhnya dia bukan guru pijit. Dia tukang pijit. Ah tidak juga sesungguhnya. Sebab bukanlah tukang pijit terlalu sering dibayangkan sebagai mereka yang suka menjelajah lorong-lorong kota dengan tongkat yang dihentakkan dan berbunyi "crek-crek" itu? Atau mereka yang suka duduk berderet di depan losmen atau hotel? Dia agak lain. Dia memijit, tetapi bukan dalam gaya dan dengan cara seperti itu. Dia memijit hanya menurut panggilan saja (Kayam, 2005, hlm. 182).

In her village she was called *Bu Guru Pijit* (means: massages therapist). Actually he is not a massage teacher. He's a masseuse. Oh not really. Because it's not too often that masseurs are imagined as those who like to roam the city's alleys with those sticks that snap and sound "creaks"? Or those who like to sit in a row in front of an inn or hotel? He's a bit different. He massaged, but not in that style and in that way. He massages only by calling (Kayam, 2005, p. 182).

Sri became a masseuse to maintain her family's economy after her husband died. After her husband died, Sri had to raise her child alone. As a result of his work, he sometimes gets bad treatment from his customers. Apart from that, Sri wants to prove that she does not want to be a woman who surrenders to circumstances and rises from adversity. Sri was able to get out of her zone as a Javanese woman, a priyayi child who was known to be polite, kind, and obedient.

Javanese society is a society that is very obedient to norms. The existence of rules or norms that apply in society makes women have no space to move. One example is when a woman comes home late at night, they will be labeled as a bad woman. The rule will continue to apply if women do not dare to oppose it. Women as objects resulted in him getting indecent treatment. The mastery of women's bodies over men makes women weak creatures (Kurnianto, 2016, p. 166). Being a weak woman does not apply to Sri. When he was harassed and became a sexual object by his customers he ignored. This is done as a form of resistance against men who try to harass them verbally or physically.

Pekerjaan jahitan besar-kecil yang datang dari tetangga-tetangganya, kemudian melebar ke orang-orang lain yang tinggal agak jauh darinya, diterimanya dengan keluhan dan pilih kasih. Semua dikerjakannya dengan tanpa keluhan dan pilih kasih. Semua dikerjakannya dengan cermat dan rapinya, serta upah berapa saja yang diberikan kepadanya diterima dengan ikhlas tanpa tawar menawar (Kayam, 2005, hlm. 197).

The sewing work, large and small, that came from his neighbors, then spread to other people who lived some distance away, he accepted with complaints and favoritism. Everything was done without complaint and favoritism. Everything he does is done carefully and neatly, and any wages given to him are accepted sincerely without bargaining (Kayam, 2005, p. 197).

Dihemat-hematnya hidupnya yang sudah hemat itu. Pekerjaan tambahan seperti menerima pesanan pisang goreng untuk kantor kecamatan bekas sekolah suaminya diterima tanpa perasaan segan atau rikuh, demi untuk mendapat tambahan modal punya kerja itu (Kayam, 2005, hlm. 207).

He saved his already frugal life. Additional work, such as receiving orders for fried bananas for the sub-district office of her husband's former school, was accepted without feeling shy or awkward, in order to get additional capital to have that work (Kayam, 2005, p. 207).

Sri realized that women cannot continue to depend on men for their lives. He tried to improve his family's economy by trading. Sri is also a hardworking woman who became the breadwinner of the family after her husband died. The figure of a mother who is very responsible is reflected in Sri. Apart from being a massage therapist, Sri tried her other luck by selling fried foods and sewing the clothes of her neighbors. He is also very careful in managing finances. Even though his name is Sri Sumarah, he never gets angry or gives up on circumstances.

Sri is one of the real images of Javanese women. She is able to carry out her feminine role when she becomes a wife and mother. When she becomes a wife, she becomes a servant and *konco wingking* for her

husband like most Javanese women. However, when she became a mother she was able to support her family, especially for her child. Javanese women are often seen as weak women because of their soft speech and demeanor. On the other hand, Javanese women are very strong and mighty women, both physically and psychologically. Javanese women are used to working physically, such as carrying rice and *dodolan* (means selling), it makes Javanese women a strong figure, especially physically (Handayani & Novianto, 2004, p. 132). However, the development of stereotypes about Javanese women has resulted in society looking down on women.

After the departure of her husband, Sri became the breadwinner of the family by doing several jobs. Sri doesn't want to be seen as weak so she looks for ways to survive, one of which is becoming a massage therapist.

Begitulah memijit menjadi mata pencaharian pokok bagi Sri. Sri sama sekali tidak merasa kecil, rendah ataupun malu dengan pekerjaannya itu. Pertama, itu halal, dan kedua, yang penting pekerjaan itu mendatangkan pendapatan yang teratur dan cukup bisa menyangga rumah tangganya (Kayam, 2005, hlm. 229).

That's how massage became the main livelihood for Sri. Sri did not feel small, low or ashamed of her work at all. First, it is lawful, and second, the important thing is that the work brings regular income and is sufficient to support the household (Kayam, 2005, p. 229).

Despite having the name Sumarah which means surrender to circumstances, Sri is not like that. As long as she is alive and given health, she will continue to be a responsible mother to her child. In fact, Tun already has a husband and he is no longer a dependent for Sri, but Sri still considers her child is still a small child who must be cared for every day. Sri did not just give up on the situation. He makes every effort to earn money as long as the work is lawful. Sri did not feel ashamed and felt like a lowly woman when she became a masseuse itinerant.

The quote above illustrates that Sri is an independent woman. Being a hard-working figure, having a broad outlook causes her to avoid men who want to seduce and seduce her. When women can prove that they can be independent, they have unwittingly achieved a socialist transformation in society. A woman who works hard and is responsible, does not necessarily do work just to fulfill her physical desires, but is a form of effort to free her from sexual pleasures and adventures (De Beauvoir, 1949, p. 819).

VII. CONCLUSION

The existence of patriarchy in this makes it difficult for women to get their existence. The novel Sri Sumarah by Umar Kayam often depicts the role of Javanese women, especially in the stories of Sri Sumarah and Bawuk. Both of these stories have plots involving Javanese women. Based on the story, Javanese female characters try to free themselves from the shackles of patriarchal culture. In addition, the characters raise their efforts in creating an existence as self-identity. The way that Javanese women do to show their existence is that Sri as a single parent tries to support her family by becoming a massage therapist who sometimes gets indecent treatment from her customers. The figures of Tun and Bawuk as wives of PKI members, they must be strong, independent women, and have broad insight to be able to adapt to the environment. Based on the background story of these characters, there are efforts made by them to get their existence as women through their feminine roles.

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