



REPRESENTATION OF PATRIARCHAL MOTHERHOOD IN “SILSILAH DUKA” BY DWI RATIH RAMADHANY

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ABSTRACT

The article attempts to scrutinize representation of motherhood in a novella “Silsilah Duka” by Dwi Ratih Ramadhani, a young Madurese writer. It tells about three female characters and their journey as mothers, which, later, create shattering events. In analyzing the data, this study applies patriarchal motherhood theory by Andrea O’Reilly. Qualitative approach with close reading method is applied. The results disclose that patriarchal motherhood in this novella is socially and culturally constructed.

INTRODUCTION

Dwi Ratih Ramadhany is one of young promising author who was born in Sampang, Madura, Indonesia. Her previous works were “Badut Oyen” which has been translated into Bahasa Melayu (2014) and a collection of short stories in a book entitled “Pemilin Kematian” (2015). Her next book is a novella published in 2009 entitled “Silsilah Duka”. Set in a coastal area in Madura, this novella tells a devastating story befall her female characters, as revealed by its title. Their experience of sorrow and grief suffered by Ramadhany’s characters, later, affect how they react and behave one another.

In this context, Okky Madasari explained well in her writing “Konstruksi Duka Keluarga dalam Film dan Sastra”. She revealed that this novella pictures sorrow and trauma which are suffered by each member of the family; a daughter in-law considered as the major cause of error because of delivered imperfect baby daughter; a mother in-law as she kept her sorrow for her entire life behind her worst deed; and a son as well as

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a husband who is powerless in protecting his wife from his vicious mother, who, apparently, grows with deep wound in his heart, and last is the grandchildren who bear a grudge toward their grandmother. So, it is revealed that there is solid cause which damage each individual and family relation as well (2020). Aside from those sorrow and conflicting in-laws relationship issues, this novella also reveals about the life of female characters, named Ramlah and Juhairiyah, whose roles as mothers in dealing with themselves and their journey in nurturing their children. After reading this novella, readers can see the mothers' experiences are closely attached to patriarchal Madurese culture and religion.

Dwi Ratih opened her novella with the death of Ramlah who commits suicide because of her depression after giving birth of her second daughter, Mangseng. Then, Ramadhany uses flashback in narrating the story, bring back her readers to Ramlah's story before she dies. Reading each chapter, Dwi Ratih introduces her readers to the other characters who have enormous impact toward Ramlah's life. Her husband Farid, and her two daughters namely Majang and Mangseng. Farid has a sister named Kholila, who always helps Ramlah, particularly when she confronts with her mother in-law's behavior. Kholila, later in the story, is told delivered a baby boy who makes her mother gets mad and annoyed.

Another mother character is Ramlah's mother-in-law, Juhairiyah. It has been known widely that relationship between in-laws is not smooth, so do Juhairiyah and Ramlah. Although Farid and Ramlah live separately with Juhairiyah, yet, she often makes hostile speech toward her daughter in-law, which put Ramlah in irritating condition and mentally exhausted. Eventually, in the second last chapter, readers discover Juhairiyah's story in her past life which influenced not only her children, Farid and Kholila but also her grandchildren. Hence, it is interesting to analyze Ramlah and Juhairiyah as mother characters depicted by Ramadhany.

This novella has also been analyzed by Aquarina Kharisma Sari in blog entitled "Mother-Centered Culture dalam Novela Silsilah Duka Karya Dwi Ratih Ramadhany". She highlights several significant points which is single narrative, mother-centred culture, and "freedom sexually" woman. In scrutinizing her analysis, she uses Mother-centred Culture by Erich Fromm, in which a mother becomes an ultimate power and honor. Female, or feminine, has long been associated with nature, both in coastal and agriculture area. Hence, women position, especially mothers, get higher and exalt position. The result of her analysis shows that mother-centred culture, along with its own narration is against single narration about patriarchy (Sari, 2019). The novella itself has been analyzed in the issue of conflicting and malaise relation between mother and daughter in-law using feminism perspective (Mufidah & Hartanto, 2020). This paper also uses feminism perspective focusing on different issue. This study aimed at analyzing the representation of motherhood in "Silsilah Duka" through the characters of Juhairiyah, Ramlah and Kholila.

In her book "Of Woman Born", Adrienne Rich distinguishes the term of motherhood and mothering. She argues that "*motherhood* refers to the patriarchal institution of motherhood, which is male defined and controlled and is deeply oppressive to women, whereas the word *mothering* refers to women's experiences of mothering and is female defined and centred and potentially empowering to women" (O'Reilly, 2008, p. 3). Furthermore, O'Reilly asserts that patriarchal motherhood has become the official meaning of motherhood, and as such, it marginalizes and renders illegitimate alternative practices of mothering (2016a, p. 19).

It can be regarded that term motherhood is influenced and characterized much by patriarchy as an institution. It is because patriarchy is a thorough system which gives meaning, description and control over women. Hence, it is repressing and domineering toward women. Moreover, patriarchal motherhood sees and puts the practice of mothering in peripheral area, instead of becoming the main focus of attention. While, mothering is different from motherhood, in which mothering is referring to the experience of women when mothering. Therefore, in mothering, it is seen as a source of place and space for women's power as well as empowering.

In addition, O'Reilly uses the term of feminist mothering to oppose the discourse of motherhood. Since the practice of patriarchal motherhood marginalizes and oppressive to women who mothers and do mothers' work, otherwise, feminist mothering supports to any kind of mothering's practices which transform and counter patriarchal motherhood's practices. Feminist mothering also disapproves the characteristics of what is "good" mother/mothering defined by patriarchal motherhood, hence, refuses over dichotomy between "good" and "bad" mother/mothering in mothers' lives (2016a).

Moreover, O'Reilly continues, "The patriarchal ideology of motherhood makes mothering deeply oppressive to women because it requires the repression or denial of the mother's own selfhood; moreover, it assigns mothers all the responsibility for mothering but gives them no real power from which to mother. Such "powerless responsibility," to use Rich's term, denies a mother the authority and agency to determine her own experiences of mothering" (2016a, p. 146). Feminist mothering rejects the definition of "good" mother/mothering offered by patriarchal motherhood because it makes mothers in a difficult situation since they have to devote themselves to the works of mothering without considering themselves as human or self who need time for healing their body and soul.

In her book "Matricentric Feminism" O'Reilly introduces her term "ten ideological assumptions of patriarchal motherhood," namely: essentialization, privatization, individualization, naturalization, normalization, idealization, biologicalization, expertization, intensification, and depoliticalization of motherhood. However, since the analysis is limited to three mandates, essentialization, naturalization, and idealization, therefore, the explanation is limited to those three mandates. In "Matricentric Feminism" Andrea O'Reilly argues,

Essentialization positions maternity as basic to and the basis of female identity...naturalization assumes that maternity is natural to women—all women naturally know how to mother—and that the work of mothering is driven by instinct rather than intelligence and developed by habit rather than skill...Idealization sets unattainable expectations of and for mothers (2016a, p. 14).

The first mandate of patriarchal motherhood is essentialization, which is explained that patriarchal motherhood assumes and expects that every woman has maternal desire naturally since they were born; hence, they want to become mothers. Being mothers is female identity. The second mandate is naturalization which assumes that the ways to do maternal practices is derived naturally in every woman, instead of getting the knowledge and skill in the work of mothering. The third is idealization which assumes that every mother has ability to attain and accomplish perfection in mothering which is fit into the standards of patriarchal motherhood.

METHOD

This study uses qualitative approach to analyze representation of patriarchal motherhood embodied in two female characters namely Ramlah and Juhairiyah in Dwi Ratih Ramadhany's novella "Silsilah Duka". According to Creswell, the characteristics of qualitative research, which are accordance to this study are natural setting, the researcher as key instrument, theoretical lens, and interpretive (2009, pp. 175–176). Data collection in this study was conducted using close reading method in order to understand the core meaning of the story. Data analysis and interpretation was done by doing some following steps, (1) they were processing and preparing the data for process analyzing, (2) reading the entire data, (3) initiating data codification, (4) using the coding to generate a small number of *themes* or categories, (5) presenting the description and themes in the form of narratives, and (6) making interpretations (Creswell, 2009, pp. 185–189). Qualitative validity was carried out in order to maintain the objectivity of the researcher. According to Gibbs (2007) Qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures, (Creswell, 2009, p. 190). Triangulation in this study was conducted in three ways, namely (1) careful, thorough and repeated examination of the research data, (2) consultation with experts or experts, and (3) discussions with colleagues who had competencies around the topic (Wirawan, 2019, p. 4).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Ramadhany, in this novella, tells three women characters who are mothers, Juhairiyah, Ramlah, and the last is Khalila. In this section, the discussion will be focused only to two mother characters, Juhairiyah and Ramlah. In order to get more comprehension, the information about social and cultural context of Madura will be added.

Juhairiyah: Mothers as identity

Ramadhany introduces the past life of Juhairiyah's character. When she was young, it is told that Juhairiyah is a second wife of a man named Haryono. He serves as an army and temporarily in duty for several years in Madura, a place where he meets Juhairiyah. His first wife and family live in East Java.

Two months after she marries to him, she delivers a baby boy, Farid, which makes her pleased, moreover Haryono because from his first wife, he only gets two daughters.

"...Juhairiyah hamil. Haryono girang bukan main ketika saat cukup bulan Juhairiyah melahirkan, dia melihat seorang anak laki-laki dalam gendongannya...Dua anak dari istri pertama Haryono semuanya perempuan, tak heran apabila Haryono teramat gembira dengan kelahiran putranya dari rahim Juhairiyah" (Ramadhany, 2019, p. 107).

From this statement, Haryono, along with Juhairiyah, feels very delighted in welcoming Farid. It means that the birth of a baby boy who brings more joy to the parents also proves that patriarchal society regards men over women. Furthermore, it can be seen that Juhairiyah's happiness over her pregnancy proves that she has maternal desire which is accordance to one of mandates in patriarchal motherhood that is Essentialization.

O'Reilly argues that in essentialization, "it is assumed and expected that all women want to become mothers and that maternal desire is innate to all women" (2016b, p. 67). The embodiment of essentialization also appears in two other women characters, Ramlah and Kholila. Ramadhany depicts Ramlah as a mother of two

daughters and Kholila as a mother of a son. It means that being a mother is an ideal and perfect condition for all women since they have certain characteristics fit into mother, such as nurturing, protecting, guiding, etc. It can be regarded that becoming mothers is significant for women, especially for Madurese women, since it is “the basis of female identity” (O’Reilly, 2016b, p. 14). It is highlighted by Niehof (1992) that the women of Madura have two destinies: as wives and as mothers (quoted in Noer, 2012, p. 181).

However, Ramadhany does not just portray her female characters as mother per se, but about how being Madurese mothers who cannot be excluded from the religion and social and cultural belief in Madura. It means that being Madurese mothers is socially and culturally constructed. Kyai A. Dardiri Zubairi in his book “Wajah Islam Madura” (2020, p. 2) states,

“Bicara Madura bicara Islam. Melepaskan Madura dari Islam ibarat melepas asin dari laut. Suatu perbuatan sia-sia tentunya. Di sini Islam bukan saja bermakna sebagai agama mayoritas di Madura, tetapi juga telah menjadi identitas kemaduraan. Madura ya Islam”

It can be concluded that the values of Islam has long been become the way of life of Madurese people since a long time ago. Madurese people practice Islam’s teachings in their everyday of life. It means Islam has influenced much on the life of Madurese. It is embodied in the character of Juhairiyah when she insists Kholila to marry to Ali’s father. Ali is a friend of Majang and several times both Majang and Ali are fighting one another. Her mother’s compelling creates Kholila’s anger toward Juhairiyah and finally Juhairiyah says, “*Mulut koq kurang ajar sama orang tua. Surga itu di bawah kaki Ebo’ ini! Kalau kamu nyakitin hati Ebo’, neraka tempatmu*” (Ramadhany, 2019, p. 94).

Juhairiyah statement refers to Hadist that “paradise lies at the feet of the mother” indicating the high status that women who mother occupy in Islam” (Pappano & Olwan, 2016, p. 1). Furthermore, because of the never-ending experience and time in nurturing and raising children, which involving skill, knowledge, and understanding, henceforth, Islam puts mother in high position and status. It is because, according to Pappano and Olwan, “the Muslim mother is deserving of respect, generosity, and kindness, which is afforded to her by her children for her role in birthing and/or raising them” (2016). So, it implies that if her children’s deed is not pleased her mother’s heart or not accordance to her mother’s demand, then, her children will be called as ‘anak durhaka’ and hell is the appropriate place for such kind of person.

It also happens when Kholila refuses to marry the man offered by her mother, Juhairiyah. Knowing that her own daughter has pregnant out of wedlock with her boyfriend, Juhairiyah gets mad and cries loudly. She says, “*Kamu tega sama Ebo’ Lila! Kurang ajar, durhaka kamu itu, Nak!*” (Ramadhany, 2019, p. 98). Kholila’s rebellion over her mother’s demand has made Juhairiyah labels her as a disobedient daughter.

In addition, Juhairiyah statement denotes her high position as a mother not only in the perspective of Islam, but also from the philosophy and characteristics of Madurese in coastal area. Madurese people have philosophy of life “*bhu, pa’, bhabhu’, ghuru, rato (ibu, bapak, sesepuh, guru, raja)*”. It refers to the order of obedience. It is meant that Madurese will respect mother, then father, elders, next is teacher, and the last is king or government. In addition, Rifai also emphasizes that, practically, it is common to find the philosophy is written and said as “*bhuppa’ bhabhu guru rato*”, and the meaning becomes ‘*bapak ibu guru raja*’. However, the fact shows that mothers in Madures play pivotal roles in decision making compared to the fathers (Rifai, 2007, p. 416-422).

Related to the characteristics of Madurese in coastal society, Rifai explains that Madurese men works catching fishes and they will be for months at the sea; leave their

wives and children at the land. As the consequences, Madurese mothers are the ones who take care of households, nurture and raise the children as well as pay attention to the other family's problems. It is assumed that this condition generates high honor of mothers over fathers (Rifai, 2007). Madurese mothers become the central and only figure in a family who hold control over the children and household things.

Ramadhany narrates Farid who outbursts his anger toward Juhairiyah after she compels Ramlah to have her body massaged. Knowing the fact that Ramlah is pregnant and massage could have killed the fetus, Farid gets mad over her mother's deed. Juhairiyah then cries out and says, "*Ramlah nggak akan mati Cuma karena dipijat begitu. Kamu berani bilang 'Ebo serakah? Lupa kamu keluarnya dari tampuk siapa? Ini lagi menantu suka ngadu. Masih untung Farid nggak saya suruh kawin lagi* (2019, p. 20). Juhairiyah's saying emphasis her higher status and position over her son and daughter in-law. Her decision becomes the ultimate one and violation is unacceptable and, sometimes, produces feeling of guiltiness in the heart of her children, as what happen to Farid as told by Ramadhany, "*Pikirannya berkecamuk. Rasa bersalah karena telah membentak ibunya ini seperti bertalu-talu memukul kepalanya*" (2019, p. 20). His guilty feeling after disputing her mother asserts the high position of his mother.

Ramlah: Unveil of Naturalization and Idealization

Ramlah is told as an assertive woman who marries to Farid after she graduates from Diploma and becomes a teacher in kindergarten school. It is told that between Ramlah and Juhairiyah have poor relationship and it makes motherhood even more challenging. Barbara Almond in her book "*The Monster Within: The Hidden Side of Motherhood*" writes that motherhood is an intensely powerful event in the lives of women, and spouses, parents, and siblings are the supporting and sometimes undermining cast in this complicated drama (2010, p. 28). It is implied that the members of the family either support the mother or discourage her since mothering is a journey full of ups and downs. Hence, in mothering, it will become the joyful moments or vice versa.

Ramadhany depicts the picture of gap between 'traditional motherhood' hold by Juhairiyah and 'non-traditional motherhood' hold by Ramlah. Traditional motherhood in this context means the tradition or cultural values exist surrounding the lives of mother during her pregnancy, delivery, and parturition period and pass from one generation to another generation. And it is considered as myths since those tradition or cultural values have not yet been proven medically.

The novella tells Juhairiyah who always undermines her own daughter in-law by indoctrinating pregnancy related-myths among Madurese, especially when she gives birth to Mangseng, her second daughter. According to Arif Wibowo, et.al,

"There are various pregnancy-related myths in Indonesia. They may be associated to food and beverage, behavior, or action. Myths in society can be categorized into myth endangering the pregnancy and myths not endangering the pregnancy. Some myths may be associated to maternal mortality. Myth is believed over generations. The origins are usually unidentified and thus they are questionable" (2018, p. 93).

She keeps insisting to Ramlah of what she should do and should not do as a mother after delivering her baby. The myths are as follow,

"Ibu menyusui harus keramas setiap kali mandi...Habis lahiran harus minum jamu delima putih, supaya rapat lagi. Kalau nggak nanti kasihan Farid. Bisa-bisa cari yang masih gres lho...Ibu menyusui harus jaga emosi, supaya nggak ngalir ke bayinya. Kalau ibunya gelisah, anaknya pasti rewel...Karena kamu nifas, nggak bisa salat,

kamu harus hati-hati. Setan itu doyan sama bayi dan ibu menyusui. Kamu masih nggak sadar kalau susumu itu dihindangi setan? Kamu selalu emosi dikasih tahu, itu hasutan setan”

“Kalimat-kalimat itu membuat darahnya kembali mendidih” (Ramadhany, 2019, pp. 47–48).

The myths above are related to what kind of food or drink should/not the mothers eat and drink, what kind of action should/not the mothers do, a mother should stabilize her emotional state, and satan loves to attach to a mother’s breast milk after she deliveries because a Muslim mother cannot do praying 5 times a day. The last sentence of novella’s quotation refers to Ramlah feeling after hearing her mother in-law’s comments while at the same time put her in irritating condition. As the result, the feeling of distress and oppressed appears and, eventually, produces depression within Ramlah. She often cries and lack of sleep which generates black circle under her eyes.

She misses her own mother a lot because she has helped Ramlah in nurturing Majang, her first daughter, before her mother dies of an accident. Although both of Ramlah and Farid are new and lack of experiences for being parents and it is unavoidably for them to make mistakes in taking care of their baby, yet, Ramlah’s mother does not much protest. Furthermore, her mother gives abundance aids, suggestion, and always put at ease of her condition. She remembers,

“Dengan bantuan arahan dari ibu kandungnya yang bisu, Farid dan Ramlah sama-sama belajar mengurus Majang yang masih sangat rapuh. Mereka bekerja sama dengan baik. Ibunya pun tak banyak protes dan selalu menenangkan meski pun mereka melakukan kesalahan dalam pengasuhan” (Ramadhany, 2019, p. 48)

From this analysis, it is known that Ramlah does not follow and obey the patriarchal mandate of naturalization, or in O’Reilly words, she “fails to adhere” (2016b, p. 72) to the mandate. According to O’Reilly, in “Matricentric Feminism”, she argues that naturalization assumes maternity is natural to women—all women naturally know how to mother—and that the work of mothering is driven by instinct rather than intelligence and developed by habit rather than skill (2016a, p. 14). In addition, O’Reilly states in her article entitled “We Need to Talk About Patriarchal Motherhood” that meaning of naturalization is “maternal ability is likewise innate to women: mothers naturally love their children and know how to mother (2016b, p. 72). For Ramlah, motherhood is not innate to herself, that maternal ability is developed, advanced, and improved by teaching, learning and suggestion from other person. Hence, she does not conform to naturalization.

Ramlah feels depression because of her competency and expectation, both together with her husband in taking care of the baby, has been interrupted by Juhairiyah. It is because Juhairiyah asserts Ramlah to have perfection in maternal ability as what she believes and expects. There is discrepancy between what Ramlah believes and expects with the reality Ramlah has to face and experience. O’Reilly argues that idealization is what “Maushart calls “the mismatch between expectation and the experience” (xi) or what may be termed the cognitive dissonance between the reality and image of motherhood” (2016b, p. 75).

The novella portrays about the gap between expectation and reality experience also reveals in the relationship between Ramlah and her first daughter, Majang. It is said that, for six years, Ramlah has nurtured and educated Majang in firm ways as to fulfill on her standard of a “good” child. Then, Majang grows up as an independent, less talk, and

obedient daughter, just like Ramlah image of a 'perfect' child. Majang's characteristics make Ramlah feels proud. However, behind those satisfying features lies one thing that, later, Ramlah regrets. That Majang is such a reserved and timid child. She never tells anybody, even her parents about her problems, but to keep it for herself. Until one day, Ramlah finds out that Majang has been sexually harassment by an old man whose works is to be a masseur. Instead of deeply mad upon Majang's confession, she feels the opposite. She says, "*Apakah aku memang tidak becus mengurus anak? Aku bahkan terlambat menyadari bahwa anakku telah dicabuli*" (Ramadhany, 2019, p. 55). 65

Her saying indicates that she starts blaming herself for not capable enough in nurturing and protecting her own daughter. She is questioning herself for not adequately to be a mother. In this context, the novella discusses idealization as patriarchal motherhood's production which positions the image of perfection beyond a woman or a mother can reach. And if a mother is not able to achieve such kind of perfection, creates the feeling of anger, bitterness, and anxiety within her. The similar situation also occurs in Ramlah when she gives birth to her second daughter, Mangseng.

Ramlah believes that she has enough breast milk to give to Mangseng, yet, Juhairiyah says the opposite since Majang keeps crying and often crying. Furthermore, Juhairiyah forces her to give additional formula drinking. Mangseng experiences constipation eventually and it drives Ramlah into unstable emotional state. Mangseng shows different treatment compared to her big sister, Majang. Mangseng is really fussy, even though she has been nursed by Ramlah, but she is still fussed. Then, Ramlah starts losing her confidence and extremely exhausted.

Abundant by complex shattered feeling inside her generates another horror image of her when she sees herself at the mirror in her work room. She sees herself of her right hand is holding a knife and the other one is holding her baby Mangseng. The horror image is certainly her projection of her anxiety, stress, and fear. She cannot bear her depression any longer. She, moreover, says, "*Apakah seharusnya memang aku bunuh anakku?*" (Ramadhany, 2019, p. 60). The sentence shows she feels of being trapped and repressed in a difficult condition in which Juhairiyah's interventions upon her life become her ultimate sources of depression. She suffers from postpartum depression. Barbara Almond says that postpartum depressions are a powerful and disabling threat to a mother's feelings of adequacy...perfectionistic expectations and the need for control make some women more susceptible to depression (2010, p. 211). Her feelings of competency and ability in mothering begin to break in pieces as she faces confrontation with Juhairiyah. As she cannot bear the tension anymore, Ramlah, at the end, commits suicide as witnessed by Majang.

CONCLUSION

Dwi Ratih Ramadhany portrays maternal world in her novella "Silsilah Duka". She depicts narration about relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, mother and daughter, even mother and son, happened in a coastal area in Madura. The novella reveals about mandates of patriarchal motherhood surrounding two mother characters, Juhairiyah, and Ramlah, namely essentialization, naturalization, and individualization.

It is conveyed that as Madurese, Juhairiyah and Ramlah experience essentialization that the female identity as a mother is the basic one. However, the position as a mother in Madura is much influenced by social and cultural context, Islam and Madurese philosophy, which put a Madurese mother at high status among the

other members of family. Hence, as the elder family member, Juhairiyah becomes the most controlling mother in the family.

Patriarchal motherhood put women in marginalize position and feel oppressed. Ramlah is the character who unveils the mask of naturalization and idealization because she is greatly burdened to the profile of those mandates.

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