

Feminist Education in Indonesian Novels Under the Domination of Patriarchy

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Abstract

This article is aimed at studying the representation of feminist education in Indonesian novels. This objective is inspired by the fact that, since the beginning of its development, Indonesian novels have raised the issues of women education which, in the tradition of feminism studies, is known as feminist research. Research shows that, although there emerges awareness of the importance of education for women, they are still positioned within the domestic arena. After pursuing their education, mostly in elementary and secondary schools, they must return to home, getting married, playing the role as wife and mother expected to be capable of taking care of the home well, and serving their husband. This points out to the dominance of the patriarchal ideology that places women in the domestic arena and men in the public arena. Such awareness truly is not always followed by permitting and giving women these educated women to make use of their knowledge to take part in the public sector; not even to merely exercise their autonomy in their own home. This is shown in the novels *Azab dan Sengsara* by Armijn Pane, *Sitti Nurbaya* by Marah Rusli, *Kehilangan Mestika* by Hamidah, *Widyawati* by Arti Purbani, and *Para Priyayi* by Umar Kayam.

Keywords: feminist education, feminism, domestication, patriarchy

Introduction

Idea of feminist education constitute one of the gender issues surfacing within a number of Indonesian novels since their early development (in the 1920s) up to present time (era of the 2000s). These ideas are apparent in *Azab dan Sengsara* by Armijn Pane (1920), *Sitti Nurbaya* by Marah Rusli (1922), and *Kehilangan Mestika* by Hamidah (1935). The emergence of these issues is not separate from the movement of feminist education in the Indonesian society pioneered, among others, by Kartini and Dewi Sartika. Additionally, this development has been motivated by the patriarchal system in the society, where women are regarded as domestic individuals who must stay home and do domestic errands (Fakih, 2006). However, in those novels, women education is still represented as merely being able to support their domestic jobs; being wives to take care of household matters, serving their husbands, and educating their children.

In the context of a patriarchal society, within which women are still marginalized, one important factor that supports the attainment of feminist education is the growth of awareness in the society, both in the family and in the community at large, to give young girls the needed education, formal or informal. In relation to this, in order to understand the issues of feminist education in those novels, in the following, description is given concerning the meaning of feminist education, particularly in the Indonesian context.

Feminist education is one education trend that has the purpose of developing critical awareness and analyses towards realities and, at the same time, supports transformational actions for justice and equality (Muchtari, 2010:61). Feminist education is past of critical education.

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This is so for the reason that the two education ideals understand that education is inseparable from realities and socio-cultural contexts within the community which carry along discrimination, injustice, and even oppression. The two education trends view education as having the roles of carrying out liberation towards justice and equality.

Critical pedagogy is one ideal thought in education that is born and developed by critical thinking (Buchori, in Tilaar *et al.*, 2011, p. vii). By critical thinking is meant a thinking process that is reflective and focuses on that what is to be believed to be done (Tilaar, 2011, p. 15). In the meantime, feminist education has the thought that, up to the present time, women have been treated with discrimination, injustice, and even oppression in the patriarchal society (Muchtar, 2010, p. 62). Critical pedagogy is also referred to as critical education (Freire, 1970), radical pedagogy (Giroux, 1997; McLaren, 1995), pedagogical transformation (Tilaar, 2002), and popular education (Fakih, 2002; Subkhan in Tilaar *et al.*, 2011, p. 137). Critical pedagogy sees that education cannot be disbanded from the socio-cultural context that encircles it, and then gives critical responses to these cultural phenomena (Subkhan, in Tilaar *et al.*, 2011, p. 137). Critical pedagogy believes that educational practices and socio-cultural environments always store nuances of discrimination, injustice, and even oppression (Subkhan, in Tilaar *et al.*, 2011, p. 137).

In the understanding of the thoughts of the two education trends above, there seems to be close similarities between critical pedagogy and feminist education in looking at educational problems. The difference between the two trends lies in that feminist education lays its focuses and activities on the education of women, who are regarded as having experienced discrimination, injustice, and even oppression in the environment of patriarchal life. Critical pedagogy, however, focuses not only on women education, but also on social groups that have received discrimination, injustice, and even oppression which, according to Mangunwijaya, are the small, the weak, the poor, and the marginalized (Tilaar *et al.*, 2011, p. 54).

Feminist education, as described by Yanti Muchtar (2010, p. 62), is aimed at redefining and reconstructing interaction patterns in the authorities between men and women that, thus far, have been unfair to become those that are fairer. This will become the main foundation for women to realize their rights. Furthermore, feminist education holds the functions of (1) elevating women's critical awareness, (2) endorsing women's transformative actions, and (3) expanding constructive dialogs for peace.

Feminist education projects in Indonesia have received stronger formal endorsement from the Government following the issuance of the President's Decree Number 9, Year 2000 on gender mainstreaming in the Indonesian national development. Indonesia has since become one of the countries which formally and legally confines gender mainstreaming as one of the considerations in carrying out national development programs. Historically, this President's decree has been a follow-up of the 1985 International Women Conference III held by the United Nations in Nairobi, gender mainstreaming being one of its outcome concepts. This concept is intended to support women in development processes and incorporate feminist values into the development undertakings (Hidajati, 2001, p. 14). This concept is further reinforced in the 1995 Women Conference IV by confirming that Governments and decision makers should initially take actions in promoting policy and program plans with gender perspectives. (Hidajati, 2001, p. 14). In spite of the fact that gender issues have become one source of attention for many parties, including the Government who has taken gender mainstreaming as one basis in implementing development policies and programs in Indonesia, the reality yet shows that there are still gender injustices and inequalities.

The present study focuses the discussions on (1) the growth of awareness towards feminist education in Indonesian novels, (2) feminist education within the tradition of women domestication and colonial education polities, and (3) representation of feminist education in Indonesian novels under the patriarchal domination.

Method

The study uses the descriptive qualitative method. Data sources are the novels *Azab dan Sengsara* by Armijn Pane (1920), *Sitti Nurbaya* by Marah Rusli (1922), *Kebilangan Mestika* by Hamidah (1935), *Widyawati* (1948) by Arti Purbani, *Para Priyayi* (1990) by Umar Kayam, and *Namaku Teveraut* (2000) by Ani Sekarningsih. Following the processes of minute reading, descriptions are presented concerning the growth of awareness towards feminist education, the entrances of women into educational activities, and the portrait of feminist education under patriarchal domination. These data are interpreted by using the feminist theory paradigm.

Research findings and discussion

1. The growth of awareness towards feminist education in Indonesian novels

Of the novels *Azab dan Sengsara* by Armijin Pane (1920), *Sitti Nurbaya* by Marah Rusli (1922), *Kebilangan Mestika* by Hamidah (1935), *Widyawati* (1948) by Arti Purbani, and *Para Priyayi* (1990) by Umar Kayam, the stories are told in the setting of the Dutch colonial occupation as shown by names and levels of education places where the characters receive their education within the cultural settings of Batak and Minangkabau, Bangka, and Java. In the novels, the issues of the importance of women education are the one that are raised. The women characters in the novels (Mariamin, Sitti Nurbaya, Hamidah, Widyawati, and Soemini) have been given the opportunity by their parents to get education, while other girls in their age still experience seclusion. This shows how certain parents in those eras already have the awareness to pay attention to their daughters' education.

In these novels, feminist education is told as having to be head-to-head with the social condition of the society, as the story background, who still strongly upholds the traditional practices of seclusion and demestication of women. By elevating the issues of women education, the novels try to put up criticism over the traditions of the seclusion and demestication of women, which is a representation of patriarchal power that has marginalized women. In a society with patriarchal systems, women are placed on a sub-ordinate position so that they receive treatments different from men, including one in education. Patriarchy is a system of relations between males and females on the basis of patriarchal rules of law. Walby (1989, pp. 213-220) explains patriarchy as a social structure system which puts men on the dominant positions, oppressing, and exploiting women. Walby has constructed a theory on patriarchy. In it, patriarchy is distinguishable into two, private patriarchy and public patriarchy. The core of the theory is that there has been an expansion in the form of patriarchy from the personal and private spaces like family and religion to a wider area, which is state. This expansion has caused patriarchy to persistently be able to claw and dominate the lives of men and women. From this theory, it is known that private patriarchy originates from the household area. According to Walby (1989), the family has been the primary initial space of the domination of men over women. Meanwhile, public patriarchy occupies the public areas such as work markets and state. Expansion of this patriarchal form has changed both the "power structure" and the condition of individual areas. In the private area, such as in the household family, power is in the hand of an individual (man), but in the public space, the key to power is in a collective hand. Awareness of the importance of women education in the novel *Azab dan Sengsara* is apparent from the attitudes of Mariamin's parents who promptly send their daughter soon after the age of seven.

After Mariamin was seven years old, she was sent to school by her parents. Although the father and mother were just village people, they knew that daughters must also be sent to school. She knew how to read, write, estimate, and count, just like boys. It was not that she would be equal to boys, but it was rightful that she had a healthy body and smart mind. In order to get all those useful things, certainly children were not forced to stay at home, but they must be sent to school, to learn things useful for them for their future lives, to open their mind, to be able to become smart and skilful mothers, especially in taking care of their household (Siregar, 1996, p. 35).

From the time the novel is written and published, 1920, it is clear that Mariamin's parents, as ordinary people (in the novel, mentioned by using the term "village people") have acquired high-level awareness on the importance of education for their daughter. In the contexts of that time, the Indonesian nation is under the Dutch colonialism and not many girls have the opportunity to pursue education.

Even though it is not mentioned what school Mariamin is sent to, from the social background of the family as an ordinary family, it can be understood that it is a domestic elementary school with Melayu and indigenous language as the language of instruction, not the *Hollands Indische Scholen* (HIS) with Dutch as the language of instruction. Gouda (2007, p. 142) explains that during the Dutch colonial time, as shown by the year of the publication of the novel *Azab and Sengsara*, for the elementary level of education there are the *Hollands Indische Scholen* (HIS), for children of the royal and the rich families, and the *Sekolah Melayu Pribumi*, for children of the ordinary people.

From *Azab and Sengsara*, it is understood that schooling for girls is not meant to make them have skills equal to boys, but to make them have a healthy body and a smart mind to be able to support their domestic responsibilities. This view is in line with the reason for schooling in the Dutch colonial time, giving education to girls, Javanese and Balinese in particular, to prepare them to take their responsibilities as mothers (Gouda, 2007, p. 137).

Awareness of the importance of education for girls can be seen in the novel *Sitti Nurbaya*. By her parents, Sitti Nurbaya is sent to the Dutch school of *Pasar Ambacang*, Padang. In the beginning of the story, the two main characters of the novel, Samsulbahri and Sitti Nurbaya, are told as waiting for the pick-up after school. From their appearance and school uniform, it can be seen that they are students of a *Hollands Indische Scholen* (HIS) using Dutch as the language of instruction (Gouda, 2007, p. 142), often called the Lower School in Dutch (Muljana, 2008, p. 42).

One of the young people, the boy, was about 18 years old. He wore a white close-top suit with black trunk, buttoned at the lower end. His black shoes were high heeled, stretched up with black silk socks, and tied with rubber laces around the shin. His hat was a white weed bonnet, one usually worn by a Dutchman ...

The mate of this young man was a girl of about fifteen. She wore a dress that a Dutch girl would. Her hair was black and thick, spun and tied around with silk thread and a black ribbon on the end. The gown (maiden raiment) was of batiste with pink flowering. Her shoes and socks were brown in colour ... (Rusli, 2001: 9).

Just as it is in *Azab dan Sengsara*, in *Sitti Nurbaya*, the purpose of sending girls to school is to prepare them for domestic jobs, not for working in the public sector. This can be seen, for example, from a dialog between Nurbaya and her cousin, Alimah. "So, a woman must be educated, for her to be distant from danger, and for her husband and children from such...." (Rusli, 2001, p. 205).

Even though the main characters in *Azab dan Sengsara* and *Sitti Nurbaya* have experienced the chance to obtain education in the elementary school, in the social contexts, however, not all women have been given an opportunity to go to school. As what has happened with Kartini and her peers in her age, the majority of young girls still undergo the seclusion tradition. If they do receive education, they are allowed to do it only until the elementary school level. Nurbaya goes to HIS, while Mariamin to *Sekolah Dasar Pribumi* (Indigenous Elementary School). In addition to all this, although girls in *Azab dan Sengsara* and *Sitti Nurbaya* have given the opportunity to receive education, they are not able to match the level of education pursued by boys. There is gender inequality in education. Male characters are given higher education; Samsulbahri (*Sitti Nurbaya*) pursues continuing education to di *STOVLA* (*School tot Opleiding van Inlandsche Artsen*), a medical doctor school in Betawi for indigenous people, while the girls must go back home to wait to get a husband just as are Nurbaya and her cousin, Alimah.

Awareness on the importance of education can also be seen in *Kehilangan Mestika*. The same as Mariamin, whose parents are not wealthy merchants nor people from the nobility, Hamidah pursues her education in a Melayu Rendah (Lower Melayu) school.

Since our father is not really from a high tradition, I can go to school anyway, a lower Melayu school for that matter, because we are not of the haves (Hamidah, 1935: 5).

In the novel *Kehilangan Mestika*, it is told that Hamidah's family becomes a pioneer in sending girls to school in the midst of the tradition of seclusion. After graduating from the Lower Melayu School, Hamidah and her older sister are sent to the Normal School in Padang Panjang.

With me and my other sister, we will continue our study in the Girls's Normal School in Padang Pandjang. Having to leave our parents and village for the first time and, what's more, to travel on the wide and deep sea makes you worried. First you feel lazy to move, leaving everything behind in the village. But Father, who wants to witness his children to be useful in the future for the country and nation, delicately induces us to go (Hamidah, 1935, p. 6).

From the excerpt above, it can be seen that the thought of sending girls to school comes from Hamidah's father who wants his children to be useful in the future for the country and nation. From the excerpts presented above, it is known that Hamidah does not only come out of the seclusion tradition to go to school, but she also has to go over the sea to a distance place from her village to take her education at the teachers' school, Girls' Normal School, in Padang Pandjang. The Girls' Normal School is a teacher education school during the Dutch colonial time (Gouda, 2007, p. 171), a school whose graduates are prepared to become teachers. By sending his daughter to a teachers' school, it is therefore understood that Hamidah's father has opened the door for his daughter to enter the public work field as a teacher.

Awareness of the importance of feminist education is also apparent in the novel *Widyawati* by Arti Purbani (1948). Arti Purbani is a pseudonym of Her Highness Princess Partini Djajadiningrat. Born on 14 Agustus 1902 from the nobility circle of the Mangkunegara royalty in Sala, she has had formal education at the *Eerste Europese Lagere School* in the same town. She is married to Hoesein Djajadiningrat.

Besides the novel *Widyawati*, she also writes *Hasta Cerita, Sepasar dan Satu Malam*, and *Ande-ande Lumut* (Biography of Arti Purbani on the back cover of *Widyawati*, 1979, second edition).

The novel, with the setting of the lives of the noble families in Klaten and the Sunannate of Surakarta during the Dutch occupation, narrates how Widyawati, main character of the novel, often called Widati, has a different destiny from her peers, girls of the Javanese nobility in general, who are to take seclusion soon as they step on their maiden ages and pass the Lower School. Friends of her age such as Roosmiati, Ruwinah, and Murtinah have to stay at home (secluded) after graduating and wait for their marriage to come. Widyawati, however, has got the consent from her father to go to a teachers' school in Betawi. Widyawati's father is a Head Judge in the town of Klaten, Central Java. Their neighbourhood is that of Javanese nobilities. Jawa Tengah. Lingkungan keluarganya adalah kehidupan keluarga bangsawan Jawa. Widyawati's father, however, is different from other parents who still assign seclusion to their daughters. He allows Widyawati to continue her study at the teachers' school in Betawi. This can be understood to mean that Widyawati's father has had the awareness the importance of education for her daughter, as can be seen from the following excerpt.

Truly, Widati—nickname of Widyawati—felt no longer comfortable living in her parents' house. But what could she do? The only way she thought best was to continue her study in another place, but her father would not finance it. However, she had not given up yet. That night, when her father was working at his table in the front side verandah, she braved herself to come closer to his chair. She then asked him, hesitantly with head down, fearing that it would make her father sad, "Father!" if I pass this exam, can I continue my study?" In her confusion and anxiety, Widati waited for her father's reply.

Widati's father looked up, put his pen slowly down, and glanced at where his daughter was standing. He stared at Widati's eyes for some time...

"Make your efforts to pass that exam, later we'll see what we can do," replied his father.

Widati smiled happily, there was in her vision hope to continue her study, and diligently she studied her lesson again. (Purbani, 1979, p. 59).

Widyawati is also pictured as an intelligent girl and always wants to share her knowledge with girls around her. Like Kartini dan Dewi Sartika, she gives lessons to her neighbours and their housemaids' children in the front verandah of her house, showing her thought that giving education to girls is something important that should be done.

Perhaps they will come again when I am at home, or Sinto will ask me for help to show her the calculation again

The kid knows how to be grateful. She told that to her friends, who lived nearby and some days later came those children to me for help. (Purbani, 1979, pp. 90-91).

The novel tells about the persistent will of the main character Widyawati. Although she lived in the environment of the old Javanese society, especially in the nobility homes that still held to the traditions of women seclusion and domestication, she had been given freedom from these traditions by her father.

Awareness of the importance of feminist education is found in the novel *Para Priyayi* by Umar Kayam (1991). Portraying women education in the era of the Dutch occupation. Through Soemini, daughter of Sastrodarsono, awareness is voiced of the importance of women education. When she is going to be betrothed to Raden Harjono, she proposes a condition of being allowed to continue her study to *Van Deventer School* first.

It's like this, Father, Mother and brothers. I accept this marriage proposal...

"Great, should be like that, my dear girl. I thought you were going to refuse or you were going in tantrum."

"Hang on, Father. I accept it, but with a but."

"Sigh!"

"I have a small request to you Father, Mother and brothers But especially to dear Harjono..."

"I want to go to *van Deventer School* first. After finishing it, I'm willing to be dear Harjono's wife."

....

"What are your considerations to going to school, again, my dear? We see you're all ready, aren't you?"

"It's these, Mother, Father. I feel I'm not ready yet. Graduating from this *HIS* later, I'll be only fifteen. Don't

we belong to noble families who are with the thoughts of Raden Ajeng Kartini who is against girls' young marriages? Also I still want to add up my knowledge and to feel how it is to go to school in place bigger Wanagalih. To Solo or somewhere else, see?" (Kayam, 1991, pp. 78-79)

Van Deventer School is a school founded by van Deventer institute, initiated by the couple of husband and wife van Deventer and Betsy van Deventer-Maas in 1917. This institution runs boarding-housed schools (*van Deventer School*) in Semarang, Malang, Bandung, and Solo for the continuing education of Indonesian girls to train Javanese girl students to become school teachers (Gouda, 2007, p. 153).

The condition requested by Soemini, to continue her schooling, turns out to be agreed by her older brother. This also shows awareness of the importance of women education in this novel.

Then I saw Hardojo look up his head and look at me.
 "Pardon, Father. May I say my opinion"
 Yes, Son. Say it."

"Forgive me, please don't be angry, Father. I'm inclined to agree with what Mini said. It's true that Mini is still too young to be married now. Van Deventer is a good school and is not too expensive, and they have the Internet. Furthermore, I am there and don't forget Aunt Soemirah is in Solo too...." (Kayam, 1991, p. 79).

When this provision is forwarded to Raden Harjono, by letter, it turns out that he gives supports for Soemini to continue going to school till she finishes. He even gives appreciation and feels proud of his wife-would-be being a progressive woman (Kayam, 1991, p. 80). This support shows awareness of the importance of women education, voiced by a male character in the novel *Para Priyayi*. However, in spite of the support towards women to get continuing education, *Para Priyayi* has not endorsed the entrance of women into the world of work. Women education is still intended to prepare women for their domestic endeavours, as seen from the following excerpt.

However intelligent Soemini will be, she is a girl. Truly my wife and I are supporters of Raden Ajeng Kartini and that we prove by letting Soemini go to *HIS*, not secluding her and isolating her in the home, buying her a bicycle, letting her learn dancing in the regency hall, and allow her to go anywhere she wants so far as she asks us for permission and does not go after sunset. Are we not progressive enough? But a girl is a girl. In the end, she will have to get married and build a family, raise children, and make her husband and family happy (Kayam, 1991, p. 67).

In *Para Priyayi* no woman is told to work in the public sector. After being married, all the women characters become housewives. From the excerpt above, it is also seen how women's roles are constructed; building a family, raising children, and making husband and family happy. This is different from what happens to the male characters. They will go to the world of work after finishing their education. All work fields in the public sector are dominated by men: Teacher Sastrodarsono, Mister Judge, Mister Doctor Candu, and others.

2. Feminist education within the women domestication tradition and the dutch educational polities

It is seen from the foregoing discussion that the growth of feminist education awareness must be confronted with the strong traditions of women domestication, especially seclusion and the placing of women into their domestic roles. Besides, women must also bow to the educational polities of the Dutch colonialists who runs education on the bases of the social and financial status of the parents. As shown by Gouda (2007: 142), during the Dutch occupation, the setting of the novels under study, there are two types of schools of the elementary education: *Hollands Indische Scholen (HIS)*, for children of the nobility and the rich, and the Lower Indigeous School, that is run in Melayu and regional languages for children of the common people. There is class discrimination in education during the Dutch colonial time.

From what can be seen of the women main characters in the novels (Mariamin, Sitti Nurbaya, Hamidah, Widyawati, and Soemini), it is revealed how these girls (including the parents who allow them to go to school) are faced with the following situations: the society traditions to apply seclusion and domestication to girls, the limited number of schools that will accept girls as students, and educational discrimination based on the parents' social classes. In some of the novels, it is told that most of the Indonesian people at that time reinforce seclusion to their daughters. It is done to girls of 12 years of age to stay in the house till they meet their match. As it is stated by Sitisemandari Soeroto in *Kartini: Sebuah Biografi* (2001: 4), during the time of the Dutch colonialization, there is a tradition among the middle and upper feudal families of girl seclusion.

Concerning the meaning of the term, Stuers (2008) whose study about women movement in Indonesia, later published in the book *Sejarah Perempuan Indonesia: Gerakan dan Pencapaian*, the word is related to the concept of "secluded horse", meaning the seclusion of a horse in the stall to be not allowed to gallop freely as the other horses do. The metaphor seems to do well as there is semantic association between horses not being allowed to go out from their stall and women not being allowed to go out from their home environment.

A depiction of the girl seclusion tradition is one in Java as can be seen in Kartini's letters (*Door Duisternis tot Licht/Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang*, J.H. Abendanon, 1979), that present the conditions of the society in that time. In one of the letters, shown in the following excerpt, seclusion practices are experienced by Javanese girls.

When she is 12½ years of age, it is time for the girl to leave her spoiled childhood life. She must take leave from her school desk, the place she loves so dearly. She must say goodbye to her European friends, though she is so happy being in the midst of these friends. She is regarded as old enough to be going home and to bow to the traditions of her country, that rule young girls to stay at home, to be truly isolated from the outside life till time comes for a man to arrive, destined by God for her to claim her and bring her to his home.... (Kartini's Letter to Ny R.M. Abendanon-Madri, Sulastin-Sutrisno, 1979, pp. 50-51).

Besides being faced with the seclusion tradition that applies not only in Java but also outside, the main characters in *Azab dan Sengsara*, *Sitti Nurbaya*, *Kebilangan Mestika*, and *Widyawati* are also restricted by the limitation that not all schools can accommodate all girls from all groups and classes of the society. In line with the social and historical contexts of that time, the number of schools and Indonesian people is not as large, particularly in the case of women. This can be seen in Muljana (2008, p. 11), based on a study by Mahlenfeld published in the daily *de Locomotief* in the early XXth century, in Java, of the average of 1000 people, only 15 can read and write. If women are included, the number becomes 16. Meanwhile, based on Groeneboers study, Gouda (2007: 142) states that Indonesian students going to State HIS are in 1915: 18,970 (men) and 3,490 (women); in 1925: 28,722 (men) and 10,195 (women); between 1929-1930: 29,984 (men) and 11,917 (women); between 1934-1935: 31,231 (men) and 15,492 (women); between 1939-1940: 34,307 (men) and 19,605 (women). These data show the low level of the ducation participation of the Indonesian people before Independence.

From the facts presented above, it can be stated that struggles to acquire education accesses at that become something that is quite significant, especially for education for women. It is in this understanding that Kartini, Dewi Sartika, and Rohana Koedoes, in each of their environments, have played a great role as pioneers of the struggles for women education. Kartini's thoughts about women education are communicated through letters to some of her friends in the Netherlands (*Door Duisternis tot Licht/ Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang*, J.H. Abendanon, 1979) together with their realization in opening classes for girls in her house. Dewi Sartika implements Kartini's ideas by opening her first girls' school in West Java (1904) which is named *Keutamaan Istri* (Stuers, 2007, p. 74).

Another picture of feminist struggles fighting seclusion can be found in *Azab dan Sengsara*, *Sitti Nurbaya*, and *Kebilangan Mestika*. This is shown by the some excerpts below.

"Riam, you seem to look at men as higher than women?"

"Certainly," replied Mariamin promptly. "If I were a man, I would be strong to work. I would be thrilled, because in my young age I could go here and there, to other countries, to Deli, to find jobs. Alas, as girls we have stay home, can not often go outside, later when I grow bigger." (Siregar, 1996, pp. 37-38).

In the above quotation, it is told that, although not mentioning the word seclusion, in the life of the people of Tapanuli, which is the setting of the novel, a girl of prior to adult age must stay home. The same case happens to girls in the Minangkabau community, as shown by an excerpt from *Sitti Nurbaya* below.

"The second thing that has made us weaker and less sharp in our thinking than men is care, work, and duties. Of care, it is from the time we can walk to we are seven years old we can say that we are a little bit free; we can walk here and there, we can feel great, we can feel free. After that until our old age, there is in our life but house to kitchen and kitchen to house and that's it.

After seven to eight years old, there we start to be caged like birds, see no sky nor earth, not know what goes on around us. Meanwhile, our clothing and food are not taken care of, not to say our wants and wishes. In the mean time, we are to learn how to cook, sew, and take care of the house; things that will not add to our strengths and sharpen our thoughts. (Roesli, 2001, p. 204).

The seclusion tradition is found in *Kehilangan Mestika*, with the setting of Bangka, as can be seen in the following excerpt.

Because in my country, I am the first to open the door of seclusion for girls, all kinds of mocking have come to the ears of our family. People in my country at that time are still foolhardy and old-fashioned. They know not what tradition is and what religion is. Much of the tradition they regard as religious rules. Girls are being secluded, prevented from being seen by people who are not relatives, especially by men. This is what I have in my ambition... (Hamidah, 1959, p. 22).

From the quotations from the three novels with different social settings, it can be seen that the seclusion tradition does not only occur in Java, as narrated by Kartini, but it also happens in Sumatra (Tapanuli, *Azab dan Sengsara*), Minangkabau (*Sitti Nurbaya*), and Bangka (*Kehilangan Mestika*). It can therefore be said that, with the entrance of women to school, the novels *Azab dan Sengsara*, *Sitti Nurbaya*, and *Kehilangan Mestika* try to despise the seclusion tradition that has domesticated women. Besides, through the dialogs among the characters in the novels, it is seen how seclusion has been sharply criticized.

The inception of the opportunity in the 20th century for indigenous people to get education, as narrated in *Azab dan Sengsara* and *Sitti Nurbaya*, is initiated by the issuance of the ethical political politics of the Dutch Government. As described by Ricklefs (1991, p. 228), the ethical politics in the Netherlands Indies starts from the thoughts of C. Th van Deventer published in the Dutch periodical *de Gids* (1899). Deventer states that the Netherlands owe all its wealth to the people of Indonesia who have been oppressed in their country. This debt should be paid back by giving priorities to the the people of Indonesia through the colonial policies. Using these thoughts as consideration, Queen Wilhelmina announces (1901) an inquiry on the welfare of Java and legalizes the implementation of the ethical politics that encompass the three fields of *educatie, emigratie, irrigatie* (education, emigration, and irrigation) (Ricklefs, 1991, p. 228).

The implementation of the ethical politics in education, marked by the opening of schools from the elementary to the university levels, has increased the number of Indonesian people to obtain the opportunity to acquire education. As stated by Ricklefs (1991, pp. 236-237), under the command of J. H. Abendanon, the Netherlands Indies Minister of Culture, Religion, and Crafts (1900-1905) the three schools for principals (*hoofdenscholen*) in Bandung, Magelang, and Probolinggo are converted to schools for candidates of government employees by name of OSVIA (*Opleidingscholen voor inlandsche ambtenaren*). Between 1900 and 1902 the Javanese Medical School in Weltevreden is changed to STOVIA (*School tot opleiding van indlandsche artsen*: school for indigenous doctors). Class-one schools, formerly included in the school system for indigenous people, are changed to HIS (1914) (*Hollandsch-Inlandsche Scholen*, Netherlands School for the Indigenous). Later on, schools of the level of MULO (*Meer Uitgebreid Lager Ondervijs*: extended elementary school, of the junior secondary type) are set up (1914) for Indonesian people of the upper class, Chinese, and Europeans who have finished elementary schools. Then, AMS (*Algemeene Middelbare School*, of the senior high school type) are established (1919) to prepare students to enter universities. There is also the HBS (*Hoogere Burger School*, Senior High School) that prepares the graduates to enter universities in the Netherlands. The first higher-education institutions are founded in Bandung (1920), called *Technische Hoogeschool* (Technical Tertiary School) and in Batavia (1924), *Rechtschoogeschool* (Law Tertiary School). Finally, STOVIA is changed to *Geneeskundige Hoogeschool* (Medical Tertiary School) (1927) (Ricklefs, 1991, p. 237).

The names and types of schools where characters in the novels (*Azab dan Sengsara*, *Sitti Nurbaya*, *Kehilangan Mestika*, *Widyawati*, and *Layar Terkembang*) take their education are schools of the Dutch colonial time such as HIS (*Hollands Indische Scholen*, dutch school for the indigenous), HBS (*Hoogere Burger School*, senior high school), *Kweekscholen* (teachers' school for the indigenous), STOVIA (*School tot Opleiding van Inlandsche Artsen*, doctors' school for the indigenous). Not everybody can go to the school. They are limited for people of the high class, nobilities, and wealthy merchants.

Mariamin (*Azab dan Sengsara*) and Hamidah (*Kehilangan Mestika*) go to the Lower Melayu schools since their parents are of the common people, not rich nor from the noble family. After Mariamin was seven years old, she was sent to school by her parents. Although the father and mother were just village people, they knew that daughters must also be sent to school...(Siregar, 1996, p. 35).

Since our father is not really from a high tradition, I can go to school anyway, a lower Melayu school for that matter, because we are not of the haves (Hamidah, 1935, p. 5).

In contrast to Mariamin and Hamidah who go to lower Melayu schools, Nurbaya and Widyawati, whose parents are of the high class (Widyawati) and and wealthy (Nurbaya), can go to *HIS* (*Hollands Indische Scholen*, Dutch school for the indigenenous) with Dutch as the language of instruction. In the next novel, *Layar Terkembang* by Sutan Takdir Alisyahbana (1937), Tuti and Maria can go to *Kweekschool* and *HBS* (*Hoogere Burger School*, senior high school) since their father, Raden Wiriaatmaja, is an ex-regent in the area of Banten. In the novel *Para Priyayi*, Soemini also can go to *HIS* (*Hollands Indische Scholen*) and *van Deventer School* because her father, Sastrodarsono, is of the noble family and a teacher in *HIS* (*Hollands Indische Scholen*) (Kayam, 1991, p. 67).

From the foregoing descriptions, it can be seen that there is a relation between women's achievement in education and the backgrounds of the family, class, and educational politics of the era. The higher the parents' standing or class, the bigger the opportunity for the daughters to be able to choose schools. In the perspectives of the post colonial feminism, it shows that there is gender inequality in the educational politics. In line with Spivak (1988: 306), in the circumstance of colonialism, women experience double oppression. On the one hand, women become sub-ordinate to men; on the other, they are under the power of imperialism.

Conclusion

In some of the novels there is representation of how powerful is the domination of patriarchy to pull educated women back into the house, waiting to meet their match and become a housewife after getting married. Even though characters in *Azab dan Sengsara*, *Sitti Nurbaya*, *Widyawati*, and *Para Priyayi* have obtained their education, yet they still have to return home to learn to handle housework in preparation for their being a housewife. An exception is found with Soemini (*Para Priyayi*) who is able to delay her marriage till she finishes her study in the Daventer school. In contrast, Mariamin (*Azab dan Sengsara*), Nurbaya (*Sitti Nurbaya*), and Roesmiati and Ruwinah (*Widyawati*) only have the chance to go to the elementary school. After obtaining their education, women remain regarded as domestic beings. In *Widyawati*, this is experienced by Roosmiati and Ruwinah who must remain at home after finishing the lower school. Roosmiati, who has been betrothed to Prince Notonegoro, is preparing herself for the wedding day (Purbani, 1949, pp. 12-22) while Ruwinah takes sewing and piano lessons to prepare herself to become a housewife.

It is clear from the foregoing discussion that women education is oriented towards becoming a housewife, not a person who is expected to have a place in the public roles. There is in this case a dualism in the initial thoughts, represented by the writers of the three novels; on the one hand, endorsing women education but, on the other, supporting women domestication. In the context of the Dutch occupation, this binary stance is in accord with the policies taken to run education in the colonial time that design education for young women, especially in Java and Bali, to prepare them to look forward to their duties as a mother and housewife (Gouda, 2007, p. 137).

Although bearing supports to feminist education, the novels still place women in their domestic domain. Domestication of women, particularly in the construction of women as a housewife, is prominent in the novels. Roles of women as a housewife are apparent in Mariamin and her mother, Sitti Nurbaya, Alimah, Roesmiati, and Soemini. After their marriage, they are positioned as housewives, nurturing their children, preparing meals, and being obedient and loyal in serving their husband. Before marriage, they are secluded, stay in the house, and wait for their match to come.

From the understanding of the discussion of the novels under study, it can be found that, from the feminist perspectives, there is a thinking pattern that is gender-biased. As it has been put forward by Abdullah (in Binar, ed., 1998: 3-5), this portrait of a woman as an ideal housewife and mother is a common view in the society. In the case where this women representation is found in novels, it can be said that the novels still retain the tradition of the presence of the domination of patriarchal structure. Women are defined as domestic beings whose existence is regarded important when they take the role of a mother who must be good at nurturing her children and serving her husband. As can be seen in the novels, the women characters are not given the rights to voice their opinion and make their decision when coming to the time they are matched with a man to be their husband, as what happens to Mariamin dan Roosmiati. The character Soemini, is able to delay her marriage age till she is 21 years old by continuing her education to van Deventer School.

From the discussion of the five novels under study, it is found that, despite the emergence of the awareness of the importance of feminist education for women, women are still placed within the domestic arena. Even after finishing their education in the elementary and lower secondary levels, they must return home, get married, and serve as a wife and mother who is supposed to be able to take care of the house and serve their husband well. This indicates the persistent domination of patriarchal ideologies that position women within the domestic arena, men in the public arena.

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