

THE PHENOMENA OF VIOLENCE TOWARDS WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN MODERN INDONESIAN LITERATURES

I Gusti Ayu Agung Mas Triadnyani
Fakultas Sastra dan Budaya Universitas Udayana
mtriadnyani@yahoo.co.id

Abstract

This paper examines acts of violence on women and children in Indonesian literatures. In fact, the issue of such a violence has recently been one of the Indonesian media's hot topics. Therefore, this may indicate the environmental condition showing the higher oppression suffered by women and children. In the perspective of the progress of technology, there is still a break of human basic rights. For limiting the topic the writer has isolated three writers to discuss. They are Djenar Maesa Ayu (*Nayla*, 2005), Dewi Sartika (*Dadaisme*, 2006) and Kadek Sonia Piscayanti (*Karena Saya Ingin Berlari*, 2007). Literary critics, such as Faruk, Manneke Budiman, and Sapardi Djoko Damono, (*Jurnal Prosa*, No.4/2004) thought that the birth of woman writer was the impact of industrialization. The amount of woman readers has been gradually rising and women become the prime readers of literature in modern era. But, along with the rising of capability of readers, these women also tend to write any works about themselves. As women, they surely have different point of view and sensibility from the men do, because those women see themselves and the surroundings due to violence experienced by themselves as well. Through the study of those three writers whose cultural backgrounds are different, this paper exposes their own characteristic sights about the phenomenon of violence against women and children. The result of this research might hopefully open the consciousness of people to better understandings of women and children.

Key words: violence, women, child, public, domestic

A. INTRODUCTION

Recently, mass media have greatly paid attention to violence against women and children that occur in public or household. Subono (2000) explained that those several sufferings, such as discrimination, sexual harassment, oppression, and rape could not be prevented, and moreover those allowed by the state. We've also presented portrayal of violence acts against children in the forms of abduction, ill treatment, slavery, until trade. The case that occurred in Jakarta International School is the example of it. So, the social and cultural researchers, psychologist, and practitioners of LSM have suggested opinions of how to repair the condition that has actually been occurring for a long period. It seems people could not realize the effects. We all know that in the hand of women generations which are good, happy, and full of spirit in facing the future could be born.

For a long time women and children always have been marginalized. The perception is that woman is weaker than man. Meanwhile the social system could not support the women's position to the appropriate one. Therefore, it has precisely made strong the norm of patriarchy. Law system also does not provide maximum protection to them (although, now there is "Undang-Undang no 23 tahun 2003" about the protection towards children). This situation can not be ignored. It must be a real action, that this problem does not only stop as a discourse. In this relation it is to be good, if we compare the phenomenon which exists in literature.

We know the function of literature is to entertain and to be useful. The reader awakens his inner self. It sometimes opens his consciousness often covered by materialism. There are many people permitted against the law. In this case, literature functions as a spiritual lesson. Actually, the phenomenon of violence not only becomes the topic of discussion in media, but is also reflected in literature. Literature, as critics said, gives readers knowledge through its own way. It could also stimulate readers to change personality by imposing any advices in scolding way (Thomas Hardy via Sukada, 1987:10). Literature plays a strategic role in directing and shaping people's opinion. The act of violence is an act that breaks human rights. Owing to this people need consciousness awakening to well realize the bad impacts that they may get.

This paper is presenting how literature gives a picture about violence toward women and children. The novels that will be analyzed were *Nayla*, *Dadaisme*, and *Karena Saya Ingin Berlari*. From this study we can see the thoughts of the women writer about violence that struck their class. Beside this, it can provide awareness to women that this matter is not only the realm of household. From this research it will emerge a critical understanding that violence raises a psychological impact to women and children.

B. CONCEPTS AND ANALYSIS

1. Violence

The terminology of violence is defined as an action of someone that hurt the other. Alan Weiner, Zahn, and Sagi (1990: xiii) tried to formulate elements of violence as "...the threat, attempt, or use of physical force

by one or more persons that results in physical or nonphysical harm to one or more other persons..." This formulation tends to focus on physical violence. Meanwhile, there is another opinion that violence is not only defined by its "physical" perspective, but also its "nonphysical" one. For example, psychological pressure has more heavy impact than physical (Fakih, 2004: 17). According to him, violence is an invasion to person's body and mental.

The violence towards women and children mostly happened among and in urban people. This situation differs from the people living in villages. They tend to be closed. But, the research in Magelang proved that actually villagers did and kept secretly their violences towards women (*Jurnal Perempuan*, 2000). Only few dared to reveal this problem because of their shyness.

One of the reasons is the family's kinship relation which is loose. Relationship of each members of the family is breakable, since each has his/her own activity. Father goes to the office, so the mother. The children go to school. After schooling the children take some courses. As the consequence, they seldom meet each other. Although quantity of meeting does not guarantee to make apart the relationship, at least this condition gives influence to the quality of communication among them. There is no chance to make communication between parents and children.

Accumulation of burdens, such as daily hard thoughts and heavy activities, might result into depression. This will be repressed partly, and the other part will emerge in the form of physical sickness, like headache, heart, or stomach. Freud explained that in psychoanalyst the process of unconsciousness which is repressed or not can be analyzed (Freud, 1978).

According to psychology someone will be easily angry and if he can not control himself, he would make violence towards others, like husband hits his wife, father strikes his child, mother tortures her child, etc. This act of violence is resulted from over depression. But, people usually take the blame on the economic pressure.

Novel *Nayla* (2005), written by Djenar Maesa Ayu, can be used as an example of novel that gives a picture of the violence between a mother and her girl. This novel started by the explanation of the main character, Nayla (10 years), who was punished violently by her mother because she had urinated on the bed.

Tapi kini, beberapa tahun kemudian, tak ada satu peniti pun yang membuat Nayla gentar maupun gemetar. Ia malah menantang dengan memilih peniti yang terbesar. Membuka pahanya lebar-lebar. Takterisak. Takmeronta. Membuat Ibu semakin murka. Tak hanya selangkangan Nayla yang ditusukinya, Tapi juga vaginanya (hlm. 2)

Violence by the mother exceeds the border of human feelings. This act indicates that her mother can not stand bearing the emotion seeing her child. Djenar smartly applied the way of different point of view and used variation of story technique. She put into diary, SMS, letter, email, short story, interview, and newspaper. Thus, readers' imagination may find the truth itself. She didn't stand on either side of the characters in the novel. She just provided facts that tied and released readers' thoughts and feelings at once. The character Nayla thought that her mother was bad because she gave her a sadistic punishment. However, from the mother's view, the writer exposed an explanation.

*Kamu tak akan pernah tahu, anakku, seberapa dalam ayahmu menyakiti hatiku. Ia menyakiti kita dengan tidak mengakui janin yang kukandung adalah keturunannya. Ia meninggalkan kita begitu saja tanpa mengurus. Aku merawatmu dengan penuh ketegaran sejak berada dalam kandungan. Aku yang membesarkanmu dengan penuh ketabahan. Aku menafkahkanmu. Aku.... Kamu milikku, bukan milik ayahmu (hlm.6).
Percayalah kepadaku, anakku. Tak ada seorang ibu yang tidak mencintai anaknya. Jika aku harus menghukummu, itu karena terpaksa. Aku yakin, Tuhan akan memaklumi semua tindakanku sejauh Ia tahu bahwa tak ada sedikit pun niatanku untuk menyiksa (hlm.8)*

From the above quotation which reveals the mother's opinion, we could come into a conclusion that her mother did not mean to hurt her child without any reason. She only wanted her child to stand independently as a woman and not to become weak. Nevertheless, whatever the reason of violence done by her mother was is wrong. The act of violence like that leaves a deep wound to the child. Nayla grew up to become a woman that suffered physically and mentally.

2. Physic and Psychological Trauma

Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event, like accident, rape, or natural disaster. Domestic violence always causes trauma to its victim/s. Domestic violence, commonly translated as "*Kekerasan Dalam Rumah Tangga (KDRT)*", has several characteristics which are more or less similar with the other violences. But, as Freda Adler (1991: 265) said: "*intimacy of the marital, cohabitational, parent-child relationships sets*

family violence apart...” Physical and mental sufferings caused by the violence done by their family or close relatives tend to last longer and to have deeper impacts to the victim/s than that done by other persons.

Sunia, the figure in the short story “*Karena Saya Ingin Berlari*” experienced this trauma. This work was written by Kadek Sonia Piscayanti, a woman writer from Bali. This short story pictured the violence done by her father. As a child that left by the mother since she was born, she became lost of the figure of mother. Since her childhood, she received many tortures from her father. She got punishment when she found out of stealing 500 rupiahs or spilling kerosene on the floor, or doing wrongly in dress wash, or climbing a tree. The selection of character “girl” seemed intentionally intended by the author because a girl or woman in Balinese tradition inherits her subordinate position since her birth. Meanwhile, the position of being a child imitates the position of being passive. A child never opposes, never asks, and only obeys. The author displayed the violence according to a girl child’s point of view.

Sejak usia saya belum genap empat, kata Merti, saya telah berlari mengelilingi desa sebanyak tujuh kali. Sejak saya sadar bahwa saya perempuan, yang ada tak hanya segenggam dendam, tapi juga seiris sakit hati, dan segores luka, bahwa saya pernah dipermalukan di depan semua orang oleh Bapak saya sendiri. Saya sudah lima tahun, kata orang, ketika berlari telanjang, mengelilingi desa dengan berlari lima kali putaran. Semua orang menikmati tubuh saya, mengupas setiap inci tubuh saya dan merampas hak asasi saya untuk melindungi tubuh, jiwa.. (hlm.29)

Sunia wanted to keep running in order to eliminate all bad memories especially when she got tortures. If in her past running was a kind of the most painful punishment for her, now it has been a place to release herself from the ill feeling to revenge. Only with this action of running, Sunia could keep on living and accept her past reality. This literature seems to represent the children who should keep on living along with the pains which always come over and over again. The success of surviving an existence must be paid costly, since all children endure heavy psychological impacts.

Some children trapped by this act of violence from the family would undergo depression haunting them to their adulthood. Beside that, they tend to become personalities mentally disturbed, such as being homosexual, lesbian, masochist, pedophile, etc. Freud (1978: xxvii) pointed out the sexual deviation. Sexual stimulus and aggressivity were two basic instincts that influenced human motivation. In novel *Nayla*, the character Nayla was characterized as a lesbian. She never got love passion from her parents.

“Otak laki-laki memang kerdil. Senggama bagi mereka hanya berkisar di seputar kekuatan otot vagina, “ kata Juli. Saya sependapat dengannya. Karena itu saya tak terlalu bangga ketika banyak tamu laki-laki dan juru musik yang lain mengaku-aku tergilagila pada saya. Mereka berlomba-lomba mendapatkan tubuh saya. Mereka pasti bangga jika berhasil merobek selaput dara saya. Bodoh. Mereka mengira saya perawan. Padahal hati saya yang perawan, bukan vagina saya, tak pernah saya mencintai satu pun laki-laki. Tidak sebagai ayah, tidak sebagai kekasih. Saya pernah belajar mencintai perempuan. Bersama Juli, saya merasakan kehangatan kasih yang pernah ingin saya berikan kepada ibu..(hlm.5)

The same situation is found in “*Karena Saya Ingin Berlari*.” Sunia’s development showed her alienation within herself. She even didn’t know how to be a normal person. However, she always felt comfortable with her close friend, Merti, who made her finally fall in love. Unfortunately, this was a sexual deviation.

“Aku akan ikut kemana pun kau pergi. Karena aku telah bersumpah untuk menemanimu selamanya. Kau harus tahu sekarang, aku mencintaimu”. Dicumnya bibir saya dengan mesra. Dia menutup matanya. Saya tak menikmatinya. Merti adalah kakak saya. Bagaimana mungkin dia jatuh cinta kepada saya. Tapi bagaimana saya menolaknya. Bibirnya masih menempel di bibir saya, ketika Bapak memergoki kami berdua. Saya dihukum lagi. (hlm.38)

A novel which also depicts a terrible scene is *Dadaisme*. It describes a disorder problem of the modern human beings. Dishonesty, illicit child who was unnormal (like autism and physical defect), and polygamy are the portrait of life in this age. The parents killed the children without worrying. Children, such as Yossy and Nedena, represented the naughty children. Dr. Aleda, Tresna, Isabella, Yusna, Asril, Ken, and Jing were the people who got morally degradation because they could not place the balance between inner self and outer world.

Lihatlah apa yang telah kamu tulis itu, Aleda. Yang kamu lihat didalam mimpimu, yang datang dan pergi dalam bayangmu. Siapakah malaikat yang lucu dan merah itu... Dan, aku terpukul

merasakannya dan mempertanyakan mengapa kamu telah membuat tanganmu berlumuran darah. Kenapa kamu membunuh anak yang kamu lahirkan dari rahimmu? (hlm.196)

A sexual deviation is also described in this novel. Jing was homosexual. He loved Ken Putra Pratama, who was a reporter.

“Aku mencintainya dan sejak kapan aku mencintainya, aku tidak tahu...,” aku mendesah pelan. “Bahkan aku sendiri tidak terima kalau aku mencintai seseorang yang sejenis denganku.” (hlm.243)

This sexual behavior experienced by Jing might be a compensation for his birth which was not wanted. He felt the revenge against his mother, Dr. Aleda who was also mentally disordered. She loved her own brother.

*“Aleda adalah orang yang paling ingin Jing temui, juga orang yang paling ingin Jing bunuh, karena dr. Aleda adalah ibu kandung Jing...”
“Kenapa Jing ingin membunuh ibu kandungnya sendiri?” tanyaku dan aku semakin merasa melayang. “Itukarena...” (hlm.249)*

In this novel violence towards woman is exposed in the form of the arranged marriage with an unwilling groom. Yusna was pregnant as the result of free sex behavior, but then she was forced to get married by his father, Datuk Malinda. Yusna could not reject because the dowry (*uangjemputan*) had been paid. Finally, Yusna escaped from the family.

Keluarga Datuk Malinda terkenal dan berpengaruh di desa tersebut dan juga di desa tetangga. Menghilangnya Yusna adalah aib terbesar bagi seorang ungu terkemuka di Cimpago. (hlm.56)

Violence towards women and children, such as to force a child doing something by parents belongs to one of the violences in household. The parents do not realize that their behavior could break the future of the children. In this novel, Yusna gave birth to a baby, namely Nedena, who then experienced depression during her whole life that in her ten years old she died hanging herself.

The condition which happened among the people above can be explained psychologically, such as Freud (1978) who explained this as deviation. A child who received this violence for a long time, he/she would experience mental disorder. If the child treated harshly by the father, he would be a person full of hatred towards men. Likewise, if the child treated cruelly by the mother, he would be full of dislike against women. Moreover, she would hate all the men who might not release her from the suppression. If she was a girl, she would be a lesbian.

Trauma experienced by a young person generally shapes his/her future personality, like Nayla and Sunia. Nevertheless, Nayla was described to be able to endure hardship and to grow as an independent person that created her as a famous reporter.

*“Tolong Mbak ceritakan sejak kapan mulai nulis.”
“Sejak kecil”
“Umur?”
“Gak ingat pasti. Yang jelas begitu saya mulai bias membaca
Dan menulis saya sudah suka menulis puisi, lantas berubah kecerpen.”
“Karya-karya itu dipublikasikan?” (hlm.120)*

The novel “*Karena Saya Ingin Berlari*” depicted the character of Sunia who kept on running, and implicitly this is to uplift the idea of willingness for not stopping to live.

Saya berlari terus menerus tanpa henti... Saya hanya tahu berlari. Saya sendiri Saya berlari karena ingin berlari. Tak ada yang mengejar saya. Tak ada yang mampu menangkap saya. Tak ada yang mampu mengalahkan saya (hlm.38)

Clearly, in the case of Nayla and Sunia, both represent persons who continually receive intensive trauma, but they can still survive. Meanwhile in the novel of *Dadaisme*, some of the characters ended their lives or were killed by the other persons.

“*Dunia dalam Celana Dalam*,” a short story written by Kadek Sonia Piscayanti, started the story by the description of the character “aku”. She was obsessed by the existence of underwear since in her perception it’s similar to loneliness. Some people thought that talking about underwear was taboo. It’s like talking about the

other topics, such asvagina or pedofil. Those are not the proper things to talk in public. Formerly, underpantfered to privacy. But now, in accordance with globalization everything can be open. Women may talk about their own body and secret as well. The pioneer of woman writer is AyuUtami (Saman, 2000), then followed by DjenarMaesaAyu, Nova Riyanti Yusuf, Dewi Lestari, Dinar Rahayu, FraBasuki, and Oka Rusmini.

Kadek Sonia Piscayantiactually wants to exploit the inner character of “aku.” “*Aku lebih suka merenungi diriku, tubuhku...*” That loneliness was related withher attitude which preferredto be alone, especially due to her name: sunia.“Sunia” in Balinese meansvery quiet (*sunyi*). Then, the story moves to the stepmother, the father, and finally also her mother. She was proud of her mother, but the explanation about her mother was so excessive.

...” Ia seorang penulis hebat. Penulis perempuan yang berkualitas. Kebanggaan Bali. Ia telah meluncurkan buku kumpulan cerpen yang digemari pencinta sastra se Indonesia. Buku-bukunya meraih penghargaan di mana-mana. Ibu tak jarang memenangkan anugerah tertinggi dalam sayembara menulis. Ia pun kebanjiran undangan dari dalam dan luar negeri... (hlm.18).

The character of “aku” was a victim figure of divorce. Her parents separated just because of the father’s accuse to the mother to be dishonest or having affair (*selingkuh*). This accuse can be classified into mental dishonesty since there is no proof or evidence of the case. Mansour Fakh (2004: 75) said this kind of violence is considered soft violence, likewise sexually insulting and creating someone to become dependent. In this story she lost the figure of mother. The underpants of her mother became media to release her yearning. Her dreams with the mother’s underpants grew like vine. She experienced tremendous hallucination, and the story ended in the event of the meeting between “aku” and her mother. She became to realize that actually her mother did not love her father.

3. Setting in Urban Area

Nowadays globalization has opened communication and information channels, so that people from over the world can engage in discussions and conversations. One of the topics which draw attention is about the problems of women and children. Eventhough there are no borders of space and time, but such the discussion is more frequently to happen in the urban area. It was clearly seen in the novels *Nayla* and *Dadaisme*, of which the two gave the setting of metropolitan.

Sebut saja kota itu Metropolis—ada banyak alasan mengapa tidak pernah bias disebutkan namanya—sebuah kota yang bila mau disamakan seperti layaknya kota-kota besar di belahan bumi lainnya di mana pun berada. Penuh dengan gedung-gedung besar, jalan-jalan layang membelah langit, mulusnya aspal-aspal yang berkilat disiram cahaya matahari, tidak lupa juga lampu-lampu yang berkelap kelip atau lebih mudah mengejanya: neon berwarna. (Nayla, hlm.5)

It is possible that the problems of violence emerging in urban area is the accumulation of life’s hardship and challenges. Everyone might take an action against the others without fear. Consequently, it is difficult to eliminate any acts of violence as long as human lives are surrounded by various problems, such as criminal acts of stealing, killing, and also raping. In this case someone must be led into a kind of life completed by morality attitudes. S/He needs to broaden the spiritual life.

C. CONCLUSION

The novels *Nayla*, *Dadaisme*, and *Karena Saya Ingin Berlari* talk about violence against women and children. The main characters in those novels can be classified as the victims of domestic violence. Domestic violence is all the action that cause physical and mental sufferings done by someone which has kinship relation with the victim/s. Sometimes parents think that they have the authority to their children, and so, they often teach them violently. In the case of *Nayla*, there was an explanation that the mother did the violence to her child because she was concerned. Violence is applied due to the reason of teaching the children. In the short story of “*Karena Saya Ingin Berlari*,” the character of *saya* received tortures from the father which was in his opinion just a kind of punishment. He seemed not to understand the difference between torturing and giving punishment. Here, punishment is an excuse to undergo violence.

The impact of this violence surely is not only about physical sufferings, but also about the most painful result, which refers to mental pressure. Usually, part of the victims are women and children who then suffer from trauma. Trauma during youth era will affect to the development of his/her personality. The three novels also described that the children who got violence would appear to own sexual deviation. The feeling of hatred to the mother and father could direct him/her to become lesbian or homosexual.

Reflected to human experiences as it was described in literature, we should become to realize that we must try to avoid any acts of violence toward women and children. On the hand of women and children the fate

of this nation relies. Therefore, it is important to awake consciousness of everyone to start to work together in developing this country by his/her own self-development.

There are three things to develop the consciousness of the people about the acts of violence. First, to change the perception of society about women and the violence to woman. Second, to change the society's standards of being harmonious in household. They want to be considered as harmonious pairs and do not admit that there is a problem in their house. Third, the acts of violence that have occurred must be reported to the competent party, like *Komisi Perlindungan Anak dan Perempuan* or *Komnas HAM*. Never consider such the problem as just the family affairs.

REFERENCES

- Adler, Freda, Gerhard OW Mueller dan William S. Laufer. 1991. *Criminology*. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc
- Alanweiner, Neil, Margaret A. Zahn and Rita J. Sagi. 1990. *Violence: Patterns, Causes, Public Policy*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich
- Ayu, Djenar Maesa. 2005. *Nayla*. Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama
- Bandel, Katrin. 2006. *Sastra, Perempuan, Seks*. Yogyakarta: Jalasutra.
- Fakih, Mansour. 2004. *Analisis Gender dan Transformasi Sosial*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1978. *Memperkenalkan Psikoanalisa* (Terjemahan K. Bertens). Jakarta: PT Gramedia.
- Piscayanti, Kadek Sonia. 2007. *Karena Saya Ingin Berlari*. Yogyakarta: Akar Indonesia.
- Sartika, Dewi. 2006. *Dadaisme*. Jakarta: PT Gramedia Widiasarana Indonesia.
- Subono, Nurliman. 2000. *Negara dan Kekerasan terhadap Perempuan*. Jakarta: Yayasan Jumal Perempuan.