



## Women and Patriarchy: When Will It End?

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### **Abstract**

*This study aims to show the characterization of women in three short stories by Saut Situmorang: Barbara, Incest, and Bah. These three short stories are in a short story collection titled Khotbah Hari Minggu, published in 2021. The women characters in these three short stories represent women trapped in stigma, powerless against patriarchal culture, and becoming the victims of male rulers. This study uses the approach of sociology of literature, gender relations, and feminism as an analytical tool. The writer strengthens the woman's stigma as the weak gender and becomes the Victim of patriarchal culture. Moreover, these short stories could reveal and reinforce women's powerlessness due to negative stigma and patriarchal culture, which often represses them. As a result, the women characters in the three short stories suffer because of their social status as single women, sex workers, and perpetrators of incest. Two women characters end tragically and die because they cannot withstand the burden of stigma and patriarchal culture. In contrast, a woman character has an unclear fate because of the forbidden relationship with her elder brother and son. The three female characters in this collection of short stories present women as victims, helpless, and trapped in a thick stigma associated with patriarchal culture.*

**Keywords:** *Feminism, Indonesian woman, patriarchal culture, short story, tradition.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the book *Penghapusan Kekerasan Seksual dari Berbagai Perspektif* (Susanto, 2017), it is stated that patriarchal culture is one of the factors in the occurrence of violence against women in this context, indigenous women. Patriarchal culture is a social construction that is entrenched and considered correct. This concept shows the subordination of men to women to illustrate the power of men over women. So that the problems of sexual violence that often occur are often not a reason for lust but because they want to show their dominance over women.

One of how men dominate women is in the form of regulations that act in the name of men and repress women. The writer has always been interested in researching literary

works in the form of short stories or novels that represent women who experience repression due to patriarchal culture. Many Indonesian writers have succeeded in writing on women and patriarchy in a way that attracts and arouses readers' enthusiasm. Some of them are NH Dini with a collection of short stories entitled *Dua Dunia*, Laksmi Pamuntjak with *Amba*, Okki Madasari with *Entrok*, Geni Abidah Elkhaliqy with *Geni Jora*, and many others. From their writings on women, patriarchy, sexuality, and issues of gender equality, it is hoped that readers will become enthusiasts and critics of reality in society, which is considered taboo and rarely discussed but is actually in demand.

The concept of patriarchy is based on the idea that the existence of a man or father becomes a phenomenon that determines the realization of a functional structure in the family (Goode, 2007). In the patriarchal concept, the social system implements and emphasizes men's important role as women's companions. Therefore, the patriarchal view raises gender perceptions about men dominating to get awards, respect, and maintain authority. Based on this principle, Sociology views that there is a relationship between patriarchy and gender existence. With the link between patriarchal culture and the existence of gender, patriarchal culture often triggers violence against women (Israpil, 2017).

One aspect of Foucault's (1997) analysis of the relationship between power, the body, and sexuality that has attracted the interest of feminist groups is Foucault's identification of the body as the main target of power, which feminists have used to analyze contemporary forms of social control over women's bodies and minds. In Foucault's view, there are several essential variables to see power relations or power relations appear in everyday life; second is social construction in society; and third is the target of power (Foucault, 1997).

To understand literary works related to society or the social elements contained in literature, an approach or review is needed, namely the sociology of literature. Suwardi (2011) states that, like sociology, literature deals with humans in society and human efforts to adapt and their efforts to change society. The patriarchal culture that often makes women shackled and powerless is in line with the sociology of literature approach, according to Damono (2003), who thinks literature is a direct mirror of various aspects of social structure, family relations, class conflict, and many more.

Several previous studies examined literary works that carried female characters repressed by patriarchal culture. In Indonesia, patriarchy has now become a culture that has been passed down from generation to generation. Based on several previous studies conducted by Sakina (2017) and Wayan and Nyoman (2020), it can be stated that the continuation of local cultural traditions or customs that contain values of male domination is also one of the factors why patriarchy is complex. To be removed from public life. Agustina (2019) and Agustina and Suprihatin (2018) discuss the patriarchal culture that also shackles Afghan women, which makes them powerless and lose the opportunity to continue their education at the university level. Another research conducted by Agustina (2021) discusses women experiencing repression due to the stereotypes often addressed to them. One of the gender stereotypes that women often experience is the result of a patriarchal culture. Johnson (2005) discusses that patriarchy as a system includes cultural ideas about who are women and who are men, what they should do according to their gender, and the unequal distribution of rewards and resources between men and women, which is the root of oppression or oppression of women.

## **METHODS**

This study discusses the patriarchal culture that represses women in Indonesian literary works in the form of a collection of short stories, *Khotbah Hari Minggu*. The data sources in this study are three short stories by Saut Situmorang entitled 'Barbara', 'Incest', and 'Bah'. The research used as the basis for writing this article is included in the type of content analysis with qualitative methods. This study went through three stages of research, namely the stages of data collection, data analysis, and data presentation. Listening and note-taking techniques were used in this study. The researcher is the main instrument in listening carefully, directing, and meticulously to literary works as research targets to obtain the necessary data. The listening results are then recorded as a form of inventorying data that will be used as material in analyzing and compiling research results. The descriptive method is used to describe the problems that are the topic of this study, which originate from the data sources obtained so that a more detailed discussion is obtained.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Patriarchy in Three Short Stories**

Patriarchy and all the stigma that follows behind it causes gender inequality and many gender-related problems in Indonesia, such as violence against women, low participation of women in several work industries, and others. Therefore, people need to realize how patriarchy takes on many roles in everyday life, especially within Indonesian society.

Over time, patriarchy has now developed further into a system and an ideology. The dominance of men in society is no longer seen as a phenomenon but as normality that gives the idea that men should have a higher position than women (Israpil, 2017). It also includes the oppression of women (Johnson, 2005). Patriarchy as a system now no longer only talks about the feud between the two genders but also about how inequality between the two penetrates all aspects, such as law, politics, and even the economy (Higgins, 2018).

Short stories limit themselves to discussing one element of fiction in the most minor aspect. According to Agustina (2020), short stories tell a small part of the story of the main actors. Conflicts can change the attitude of the leading actor or character. It is what distinguishes short stories and novels. The three short stories selected in this study highlight female characters who are stigmatized and suffer from the construction of a patriarchal culture, which tends to limit the life choices they make, regulate, and even repress.

### **Barbara: A Critique of the Independent Woman**

Barbara's short story tells of a rich and beautiful middle-aged Dutch woman. She is a very busy and successful career woman and has a position as a manager of an international company. Work is the number one thing in life, so she is single at forty-five. The depiction of an independent woman who prioritizes career over family life in the female character Barbara is a form of resistance to the nature of women who must marry, take care of their husbands, have children, and do household chores.

*Dia masih ingin menekuni karirnya yang sedang baik daun. Dia ingin jadi seorang profesional sejati. Juga dia tak mau kariernya dicampur aduk dengan*

*segala urusan yang bernama rumah tangga. Dia masih belum ingin punya suami, maupun anak. Dia masih ingin sendiri. Akhirnya tak ada laki-laki yang mau mencoba mendekatinya. Dan hingga usianya yang keempat puluh lima ini pun Barbara masih juga belum menginginkan sebuah perkawinan (Situmorang, 2021, p 2).*

She still wants to pursue her career, which is currently rising. She wants to be a true professional. Also, she wants her career to be distinct from household matters. She still does not want a husband or children. She still wants to be alone. In the end, no man wanted to try to approach her. Moreover, even at the age of forty-five, Barbara still does not want marriage (Situmorang, 2021, p. 2).

The above quotation shows that Barbara's choice to focus on a career and not marry is undoubtedly considered an unusual choice in a patriarchal society. Ideally, a woman should stay married, have children, and stay home. Then, Barbara's choice suddenly changed when she was entrusted with her two children by her cousin, who wanted to do research for one month in a remote village. At first, Barbara objected and was forced to care for her two small children. She found it difficult even though her household help had assisted her. Significant changes occurred when Barbara, an independent woman, had to agree that the presence of children for a woman was significant and very happy. The writer noticed two things in Barbara's changing attitudes and principles. First, the author tries to show that a female character can be happy with her life choices that tend to go against the views of patriarchal culture. Second, the author supports the view of a patriarchal society, which assumes that women who are successful but do not have children will eventually suffer because they are lonely and unhappy. Barbara finally felt that life at the age of forty-five was when she was with her two cousins who lived in her house for one month, not when she became a successful career woman.

### ***Incest: A Critique of Local Culture***

The female character in the short story *Incest* is nameless. Situmorang deliberately did her naming to hide the fact behind the story that he is very close to one of the clans in the Batak tribe. What is interesting about the female character in this story is an act that is considered to violate religion and culture throughout the world. Sexual intercourse with siblings can trigger genetic disorders in offspring, the risk of congenital disabilities, passing on the same disease to offspring, causing hemophilia, infant mortality, and weakening of the body's systems due to lack of DNA variation. The narrator I in the short story *Incest* says that due to the incestuous relationship, their descendants still exist and gave birth to the Lottung clan, one of the largest clan groups in the Batak.

*Coba bayangkan. Seorang perempuan muda jatuh cinta sama abang kandungnya, berhubungan seks dengannya, bunting, ketahuan keluarganya, diusir dan dikejar-kejar dari negerinya, pisah dari abang kandungnya, melahirkan seorang putra, membesarkan putranya, pisah dari putranya, jatuh cinta sama seorang laki-laki muda dan berhubungan seks dengannya yang ternyata adalah putranya yang dulu pisah darinya. Hm. Keturunan mereka*

*sampai sekarang malah masih ada! Bahkan jumlahnya seperti pasir di pantai dan bintang-bintang di malam tak berawan (Situmorang, 2021, p. 36).*

Just imagine. A young woman falls in love with her biological son, has sex with him, becomes pregnant, is found out by her family, expelled and chased from her village, separated from her biological son, gives birth to a son, raises her son, separates from his son, falls in love with a young man and has sex with him who turns out to be the son she separated. Hmm. Their descendants still exist today! Even the amount is like the sand on the beach and the stars on a cloudless night (Situmorang, 2021, p.36).

Indonesia is famous for its diverse ethnicities. Several ethnic groups are known to glorify patriarchal culture greatly. It makes women a group, often the Victims, because everything is secondary. In the short story *Incest*, an anonymous female character commits incest with her son. Ironically, inspired by an event, this story produced many derivatives to become a clan within the Batak ethnic group. The satirical style became very strong, displayed by Situmorang towards one of the clans, which originated from violating religious values and propriety in society. This short story is rich in social criticism of local culture to reveal the truth sometimes hidden in public. The narrative at the end of the story is that the female character gives birth to nine children from an incestuous relationship, which is strictly prohibited. However, in reality, it exists in society. This short story reminds us that incest should not be done because it violates religion and social values.

#### ***Bah*: A Critique of Male's Dominant**

The third short story, *Bah*, narrates about a woman without a name. The narrator is a man who calls it *my woman*. This woman is a prostitute who gets sexually assaulted by a jealous customer because she is also having an affair with the narrator. The narrated repression is in the form of non-verbal violence in the form of swearing and shouting with harsh words and verbal violence in the form of slaps, hair pulling, and rape while holding a gun. The status of a male customer who commits violence is a mayor who automatically has power and money.

*Laki-laki itu menarik rambutnya hingga dia kembali ke posisinya semula duduk di atas ranjang. Kemudian kembali tangannya melayang berkali-kali ke wajah perempuanku yang mulai berdarah itu. Kulihat bibirnya pecah dan darah ada di wajahnya, baju tidurnya, seprei, dan di tangan kanan laki-laki itu. Laki-laki itu lalu merogoh saku jaketnya dan mengeluarkan sesuatu dari dalamnya. Sebuah pistol kecil (Situmorang, 2021, p.55).*

The man pulled her hair until she returned to her original position, sitting on the bed. Then his hand flew back many times to my woman's face, which was starting to bleed. I saw her lip was split, and blood was all over her face, her nightgown, her sheets, and on the man's right hand. He then reached into his jacket pocket and took something out of it—a small gun (Situmorang, 2021, p.55).

The narrator narrates that the female character experiences verbal and non-verbal physical abuse from the mayor. The repression experienced by female characters shows that the authority of power lies with the mayor, who has power and money. This domination inevitably makes the female character helpless, feel scared, and can only cry. This second short story ends tragically with the death of a prostitute. The mayor shoots the gun, causing the female character to die. Ironically, the mayor manages to frame the narrator as the perpetrator of the murder and gets a ten-year prison sentence from the panel of judges.

From the three short stories, the issues presented are very close to the stigma, repression, and violence experienced by women. From the stigma about women experienced by the character Barbara, the success of women is always seen as something lacking or imperfect. From ethnic superiority thick with patriarchal culture, the female character without a name is considered guilty because she is unaware that she has had an incestuous relationship with her biological child. Lastly, from the character of my woman, the domination of power and money owned by the mayor makes her suffer massively in the form of verbal and non-verbal violence, which ends in death. Life is not considered something valuable just because she is a prostitute.

Men's violence against women is considered part of the system that controls women, unlike the traditional viewpoint, which holds that rape and repeated beatings are exceptional cases involving psychological problems for some men. There is no ideal word for violence against women. Both verbal and verbal violence will only cause prolonged trauma and injury.

## CONCLUSION

The question and title of this research is *Women and Patriarchy: When will it end?* The writer hopes it is not only a question without an answer. Patriarchy is an ideology of how men dominate. Indonesian society, which is very close to patriarchy, always considers men to have power and control. Women are usually exploited, disadvantaged, and have lower status. Things are different; usually, female writers voice gender injustice experienced by women, but through Saut Situmorang, male voices also want to voice injustice, which often causes repression for women. Through these three short stories, it is hoped that patriarchy will no longer be stigmatized and repressed. It is because women are not victims of culture in society. Patriarchy should be a way for women to have equality with men. Women should also have the same rights and opportunities as men to create a generation free from patriarchal culture, which causes sadness and disappointment.

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