

# Exploitation of Women in the Novel *Bumi Manusia* By Pramoedya Ananta Toer

Lilik Herawati, Agus Nuryatin, Teguh Supriyanto, Mukh Doyin

Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

\*Corresponding Author: [lilikher74@gmail.com](mailto:lilikher74@gmail.com)

**Abstract.** The relationship between men and women is often described in literary works. Women often experience various forms of exploitation. Research that examines problems from a women's perspective with the aim of showing that men and women are treated differently is one of the goals of feminist studies. This research is expected to be able to describe the depiction of exploitation of women in the novel *Bumi Manusia* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer. As previously mentioned, this study aims to explain how patriarchal culture depicts the exploitation of women and how this can harm women. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method by utilizing quotations from the novel which is used as the data source, namely the *Bumi Manusia* Novel by Pramoedya Ananta Toer. The instruments used in exploring the double-dealing of ladies in the original *Human Earth* involve real scientists as the instruments, because specialists are information gatherers and information analyzers assisted by information cards. The results of the analysis reveal that the novel *Bumi Manusia* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer contains the ideology of postcolonial feminism with the aim of reconstructing the position of women.

**Keywords:** *Bumi Manusia*; feminist; novel

## INTRODUCTION

Women are figures that are always talked about, in the social, political, economic, religious, literary and artistic fields. What is often discussed is gender inequality between women and men, which is related to the oppression, harassment, exploitation, and injustice that women often experience (Ermawati & Nurhadi, 2020). These issues gave rise to a development that seeks to maintain equality between genders known as feminism (Mulyaningsih, 2015).

Fakih (2013) said that the movement to end exploitation or oppression which is based on the premise that women are often oppressed and exploited is an understanding of feminism. The large number of exploitation of women is one of the factors that contributed to the rise of the feminist movement. The act of taking advantage of other people, with or without their consent, with the intention of making a profit can be termed as exploitation. Kumari (2016) says that there are three types of women who are exploited, namely by family members, partners, and other members of society.

One of the novels that is interesting to study and contains the exploitation of women is *Bumi Manusia* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer. The female figure in this novel becomes the subject of exploitation, where she gets things that women shouldn't get. During the colonial era, the majority of women did not enjoy the same rights as wives of their lawful husbands as did native women who married white Dutch men. It turned

out that the native women who became mistresses had to fulfill their sexual needs, take care of and serve their master's needs related to household matters.

For three hundred years Indonesian people were colonized by the Dutch and Japanese. Exploitation was also carried out in rotation on the wealth of spices, but the natives could not do anything (Hastuti, 2018). This is because natives do not get adequate education. Indigenous peoples were trampled on by their pride since Europe entered the archipelago, allowing Europeans to do whatever they wanted with their colonies. On the other hand, indigenous people are forced to let their homeland be robbed for the sake of survival. There is still a lack of understanding of diversity and rights, so many natives are exploited, especially women (Alfaidzin et al., 2021).

Research on literary works needs to be done to find out how literary works relate to everyday life that occurs in society. Novel is one of the many types of literary works that are popular with the public to read and even to study. The novel used by researchers is the *Bumi Manusia* novel by Pramoedya Ananta Toer. This novel is very interesting because it clearly contains exploited female characters. Besides that, in this novel there is resistance to the exploitation of women experienced. Feminist literary typology theory is considered as a tool to dissect the forms of exploitation of women contained in the novels studied

The significance of how much literary

works reflect the truth that occurs in society regarding problems can be studied with a sociology of literature approach (Hastuti, 2018: 67). Swingewood's theory of sociology of literature forms the basis of this research theory. This is used because according to Swingewood, literary works show the relationship between social, family, and cultural inequality and social stratification.

The exploitation of women in literature has been the subject of much research. Ermawati & Nurhadi (2020) uses a literary sociology approach to examine the exploitation of women in the novels *Kelir Slindet* and *Telembuk* by Kedung Darma Romansa. In her research, it was found that prostitution and premarital sex experienced by Safitri were the most common forms of exploitation. In another article, "Exploring Radical Feminism Through Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *One Amazing Thing* (2010)," conducted by Trivedi & Gauswami (2021) describes a series of collective efforts, progressive movements and philosophies aimed at defining and building gender representation in politics, economy, family, and society. Rahayu, Setiadi, and Firdaus (2021) in their research which analyzes the exploitation of women and injustice towards women's rights or freedoms contained in the novel *Biru* by Fira Basuki, which is motivated by women's issues and the bad forms experienced by women, but cannot voice equity and can only surrender to conditions. The use of a new data source that describes the situation of the natives during the Dutch post-colonial period is an advantage of this study compared to previous studies.

Other research that discusses the position of women, especially the exploitation of women in literature, namely Nenil, Herson, and Ja'far (2022) in their research discussing the exploitation of women and the objectivity of women in the novel *Hilda* by Muyassarotul Hafidzoh which uses radical feminism theory, found exploitation of the body women, emotional exploitation, educational exploitation, sexual exploitation, physical exploitation, and social exploitation of women. In addition to research on the exploitation of women in literary works, there is also research on the exploitation of women conducted by Tahir and Dewi (2019) in their research discussing the exploitation of women in the *Bigo Live* application from a Marxist-Socialist point of view. In his research, it was found that the exploitation of women was carried out by the viewers and the broadcasters

themselves via live streaming, including sexual exploitation, forced labor, and inhibition of social status.

Related to research objectives, especially to find various forms of exploitation of women contained in the novel *Bumi Manusia* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer with a sociological approach to literature. Therefore, this research has several benefits. One of them is expected to be able to contribute to the progress of literature and can contribute to increasing appreciation of literary works, especially those that raise issues related to feminism. For the wider community, it is hoped that it can contribute to increase understanding and wider attention to gender equality so that they can have the same rights to carry out various activities. In addition, this research is also expected to be a reference or literature review for future researchers.

## METHOD

A qualitative descriptive method was used in this research which is able to construct research results related to circumstances that are in accordance with the conditions in depth about the exploitation that occurs in women in the novel *Bumi Manusia* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer. The approach used is sociology of literature with Swingewood's theory. The data source used in this study is the ninth edition of 2002's novel *Earth of Mankind* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer, which was distributed by Hasta Mitra, Jakarta. The story of Minke, a Javanese teenager who manages to attend HBS and tells of Javanese women who are harassed by Europeans and referred to as concubines or prostitutes, this shows Dutch exploitation of the native population.

Literature study is used in collecting data with reading and note techniques. The triangulation method is used by researchers to test the validity of the data. While content analysis is used to analyze the data in the novel under study, by identifying and classifying data according to the type of exploitation of women, analyzing by explaining using the researcher's interpretation, completing findings, and writing research reports.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Forms of Exploitation of Women Prostitution

In the novel *Bumi Manusia*, female characters become prostitutes to satisfy male sexual desires. According to Kartono (2015), this

is categorized as prostitution because it involves women selling themselves to perform sexual acts in order to make a living. This definition makes it clear that selling oneself as a profession through sexual relations does occur.

Maiko, originally from Nagoya, Japan came to Hong Kong as a prostitute. Maiko was initially employed by a Japanese employer before being sold to a Chinese employer and brought to Singapore. As the following excerpt shows, the employer engaged in open prostitution in his home.

*“Tawar menawar yang cukup lama. Akhirnya dibelinya aku seharga tujuh puluh lima dollar Singapura, harga tertinggi untuk wanita umum Jepang di Singapura” (BM: 186)*

Besides that, there are also other quotes which state that there was an act of prostitution in the novel Bumi Manusia.

*“Nah, Nyo, ini Maiko. Baru dua bulan dating dari Jepang. Ini kepunyaan aku sendiri. Boleh juga kalau Sinyo suka. Duduk saja sini dekatnya” (BM: 183)*

The transaction between Robert, who is usually called Sinyo, and Maiko's employer, Ah Tjong, can be seen in the quote above. This exchange was made when Sinyo, who was invited to come to Babah Ah Tjong's house, was offered several women, but Sinyo was not interested in the several women he offered. Until Babah Ah Tjong offered Maiko which was his.

### **Early Child Marriage**

Economic factors, education, and belief in pre-existing customs are the main contributors to early childhood marriage. In the amendment to the Marriage Law Number 1 of 1974 it is stated that it is mandatory for a man and a woman to have the option to enter into a marriage if they are both 19 years old. (Ermawati & Nurhadi, 2020).

There is a quote in the novel Bumi Manusia which describes the existence of early marriage. This is what happened to Annelies' friends who were married off at an age that could be considered a child. Annelies also experienced it when she was thirteen years old, her parents began to shut her down and reduce her outside interactions, so most of her activities were done at home. The following quote shows just that.

*“Waktu berumur tiga belas aku mulai dipingit dan hanya tahu dapur, ruang belakang, dan kamarku sendiri. Teman-teman lain sudah pada dikawinkkan” (BM: 83)*

In addition to the above quotation, other quotations indicate the existence of early marriage which is the subject of the following quotation. During the colonial period many women were married off at an early age, largely due to finances and traditions. As a result, when children reach puberty, they believe they are ready to marry. According to the following quote, when a child is fourteen years old and unmarried, they are called an old maid.

*“Waktu berumur empat belas masyarakat telah menganggap aku sudah termasuk golongan perawan tua” (BM: 84)*

In the quote above, Annelies is referred to as an old maid by the people in her environment because she was not married at the age of fourteen. Even though at the age of twelve Annelies had her period and made many proposals, but her father refused because she had her own plans

### **Sales of Children**

Clearly, trafficking in women, especially children in Indonesia occurred during the colonial period when the Dutch controlled Indonesia. They were handed over to Europeans to be mistresses or concubines, the position of concubines was considered very disgraceful by society at that time. Marriage to a Christian woman was a requirement for high-ranking Dutch men. This made it difficult for Dutch men to marry legally, so many of these men then had nyai or concubines. The nyai who are also called concubines are usually the descendants of female slaves who are usually poor and less independent because of their status as slaves (Arliman, 2018).

The following is an excerpt from the novel Bumi Manusia, in which there is a sale of people, especially girls who are used as wives for Europeans.

*“Begitulah, Ann, upacara sederhana bagaimana seorang anak telah dijual oleh ayahnya sendiri, jurutulis Sastrotomo. Yang dijual adalah diriku: Sanikem” (BM: 87)*

In the quote above, the sale of a child experienced by Sanikem, by his own father, Sastritimo's scribe to Tuan Besar Kuasa, is illustrated. Sanikem's father received a sum of twenty-five guilders and was promised his appointment as a cashier after passing the two-year tenure as a form of compensation for his son.

### Female Workers

Women are always assumed to be domestic workers who are considered unable to work effectively outside the home so that their work is limited to the house (Tuwu, 2018). During the Dutch colonial era, the role of women was looked down upon with disdain. Mouton & Company S, (235) wrote that finding a decent job was very difficult in their situation. Many of them are only used as servants or slaves to satisfy lust (bitch). Indeed, those with a lack of faith will use various means to stand out (Achsani, 2020).

There are quotes in the novel Bumi Manusia which show the exploitation of women at work

*"Aku sendiri masih termangu melihat perempuan meninggalkan dapur rumah tangga sendiri, berbaju kerja, mencari penghidupan pada perusahaan orang, bercampur dengan pria! Apa ini juga tanda jaman modern di Hindia"* (BM: 27)

When Annelies invites Minke to see what she is doing, it is clear that many women are exploited for work, as quoted above. Minke is surprised when she arrives at the place where Annalies is intended because not only men work there, but there are also women who get jobs that are not in accordance with women's strengths.

*"Aku telah paksa kau bekerja seberat itu sebelum kau cukup umur, bekerja setiap hari tanpa liburan, tak punya teman atau sahaba, karena memang kau tak boleh punya demi perusahaan ini"*. (BM: 108)

The exploitation of girls is discussed in the quote above, as are other excerpts from the novel Bumi Manusia. This was conveyed when Annelies' mother, Nyai Ontorosoh, apologized for requiring Annelies to work every day without days off, thus making her have no friends at a very young age. In addition, Annalies is prohibited from making friends with her employees and is required to continue learning to be a good employer.

Other quotes that describe the exploitation of women at work can be seen when Nyai Ontorosoh takes care of everything that has to be

done at home, starting from working, raising children, to taking care of her husband, namely Herman Mellema. Nyai Ontorosoh has to face a double workload. This can be proven by the accompanying statements.

*"Kau pergi, bagaimana aku? Bagaimana sapi-sapi itu? Tak ada yang bias mengurusnya"*(BM: 93)

After the appearance of Maurits Mellema, which made Mr. Herman Mellema no longer work. With this in mind, Nyai Ontorosoh got a double job, namely managing the factory and taking care of her two children. The quote below can describe it

*"Semua, Buku. dagang, surat-menyurat, bank..."*(BM: 28)

Nyai Ontorosoh gave Annelies several things because she had more work to do, so that Annelies had to work twice as hard. This can be seen in the accompanying quote

*"Apa pekerjaanmu sesungguhnya?"*  
*"Semua, kecuali pekerjaan kantor. Mama sendiri yang lakukan itu"*. (BM: 28)

Gender bias is often exacerbated by societal perceptions or beliefs that women's work is valued less highly than men's work, which prevents women's work from being included in the country's economic statistics. Gender bias is essentially a perspective and attitude that favors one gender against another, such as men towards women (Aisyah & Widodo, 2019). For example, men are more skilled and more competent than women, so men are considered more capable of carrying heavy burdens and have the potential to become pioneers.

### Rape

The most severe form of abuse is rape. Rape is an act that violates the law. This is done by coercion from one of the parties by way of genital penetration (Nanil et al., 2022). In the novel Bumi Manusia, the main character, Annalies, was raped by Robert Mallena, her older brother. This happened when Annalies was ordered by Nyai Ontorosoh to look for Darsam in the village with her favorite horse.

*"Dipeluknya aku dengan tangan kirinya yang sekaligus menyumbat mulutku. Aku*

*tahu akan dibunuh. Dan aku meronta, mencakari mukanya. Pada waktu itu aku baru mengerti peringatan Mama: Jangan dekat pada abangmu.” (BM: 271)*

The situation when Annalies screamed for help because she was afraid that Rober would treat her in obscene ways, is illustrated in the quote above. When she received this treatment, Annalies just understood everything Nyai Ontorosoh had told her not to get too close to her brother, but it was too late to realize it.

*“Kemudian ternyata olehku dia hendak perkosa aku, sebelum membunuh. Ia sobeki pakaianku. Mulutku tetap tersumbat. Dan kudaku meringkik-ringkik keras” (BM: 271)*

The situation that Annalies faced when she asked her horse for help is also described in the quote above, but because Robert was so strong it could not be avoided. Annelies' rape made her feel insecure and undermined her mental health, requiring the services of a specialist. Not only that, Annelies was also devastated by what happened to her, this caused Minke to help improve herself.

### **Relationship before marriage**

Premarital sex is a form of sexual exploitation. This is in accordance with Komnas Perempuan's statement (2017) that the act of luring marriage to obtain sexual services from women, then being abandoned is a practice of sexual exploitation. Premarital sex occurs in the character Annalies. Annalies is Minke's lover who is an educated native. Annalies and Minke who are still dating have had sex as the following quote says.

Sexual exploitation can occur through premarital sex. According to Komnas Perempuan (2017), seducing women with promises to marry in order to get sexual services from them and then abandoning them is a form of sexual exploitation. According to the following quote, Annalies and Minke, who are still dating, had intercourse.

*Yang ada hanya dia dan aku yang diperkosa oleh kekuatan yang mengubah kami jadi sepasang binatang purba. Dan kami tergolek tanpa daya, berjajar, kehilangan sesuatu.”*

*“Menyesal, Mas ?”*

*“Benarkah aku bukan lelaki pertama, Ann ?” (BM: 267)*

According to the quote above, Annalies and Minke had sex before they got married. This is illustrated by using his lover to satisfy his sexual needs, this is a form of sexual exploitation of women.

*“Di atas bendi ini setiap orang yang terpandang olehku kurasai sebagai menuding: itulah dia si Minke yang sudah sekamar dengan Annelies, wanita yang belum dinikahinya. Itulah” (BM: 323)*

The earlier quote, which suggests that Minke and Annalies had sex before marriage indicated by their being in the room together despite not being legally married, is also supported by the above quote.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that in the novel Bumi Manusia by Pramoedya Ananta Toer there are six forms of exploitation of women, namely prostitution, female workers, forced marriage at an early age, selling children, rape, and premarital sex. The most dominant exploitation of women is prostitution and premarital sex. At that time, many women, especially Javanese or native women, were used as concubines by Europeans and many were exploited, both from their bodies to their bodies. The results of the analysis reveal that the novel Bumi Manusia by Pramoedya Ananta Toer contains the ideology of postcolonial feminism with the aim of reconstructing the position and exploitation of women.

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