"Inem," "A Jury of Her Peers," and Indonesian Women: Tradition or In Transition?
Lany Kristono

ABSTRACT

As the titles indicate, the central characters of Pramoedya Ananta Toer's "Inem" and Susan Glaspell's "A Jury of Her Peers" are women. Inem and Minnie Foster. They share things in common, despite the different settings of the stories have. Written in 1952, "Inem" depicts events taking place in Blora, a coastal town in Central Java; while "A Jury of Her Peers" delineates an experience in Dickson County, USA, in 1917. The contrasting east-west setting does not seem to have any significance in the main characters' relationships with a man in an institution called marriage. However, it does contribute to the contrasting fate Inem and Minnie have because of (an)other women. Glaspell has Minnie's female friends cover up the proofs of the crime Minnie has committed; thus, they save her from imprisonment. By doing so, the women act against the law, yet they are willing to take the risks. In contrast, Mother, who should be Inem's benevolent protector, refuses out of propriety to help Inem. Once she has become a victim of her family, husband, and social norms, Inem eventually has to surrender to the social conventions. This triggers the question of what makes these women decide to take contrasting attitudes toward the suffering of other women close to them, and whether social norms are more dominant than the law in determining the life of Indonesian women.

Inem has lived through all orders in Indonesian history; it has survived the Old and New Orders as well as the Reform Order, which is often associated with the nation's success in establishing democracy, including freedom of speech and expression. In politics, which determines a nation's culture, Indonesia superseded the United States by electing Megawati, a woman, as president in the year 2000. However, the paper concludes that, as reflected in the recent events concerning women in the country, when it comes to Indonesian women, politics tends to be governed by the established culture.

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Introduction

Although globalization seems to be changing the world into one big village, it does not and will not abolish cultural differences among nations because region shapes culture (Hofstede, 1997). Hofstede defines culture as "a collective phenomenon because it is as least partly shared with people who live or lived within the same social environment which is where it was learned." (5). Offering dissimilar life experiences, different regions require people to respond differently.
to ensure survival. Those living in a big city; for example, will have social habits and relations distinct from those dwelling in a small town, let alone in a remote area. As Hall and Neitz (11) maintain, "culture is often deeply embedded in our daily lives." Similarly, Karl Marx, in Bressler (1999), proposes that daily activities and social relationships shape one's personal awareness. Since people generally prefer to be in-group, they will adjust to their society, and thus adopt the societal values in building their identity. Bressler, quoting Marx, asserts that "what we believe, what we value, and in many ways what we think are direct results of our culture and our society, not our religion and philosophy of life" (219). At the same time, a culture is not passive. It actively directs the behavior of its members through norms and values (Hall and Neitz, 1993), thus assuring that a culture will be shared and inherited by the younger generation. On the other hand, culture also enables diversity among members of a society. Coben and Rater (1983) elaborate that individuals in a society share the prevailing cultural tendencies in different degrees due to age, gender, ethnicity, social class, nationality, and geographical location.

The world is often in binary opposition as East and West, with their distinctive cultural characteristics. The East is labeled a collectivist society, while the West is considered individualistic. Despite their dissimilarities, East and West share one thing in common: their societies are both patriarchal. Hofstede's study on values of similar IBM employees in various countries reveals several common problems. One of them is "concepts of masculinity and femininity: the social implications of having been born as a boy or girl" (14). He elaborates that the so-called men culture and women culture exist in every society. These imply that one's sex determines what gender roles one will play and what social expectations one will meet later.

**Patriarchy**

According to Hartman in Riddough (74) patriarchy is "a set of social relations between men which have a material base and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enables them to dominate women." Hartman mentions marriage, childrearing, housework, and women's economic dependence on men as some of the elements of patriarchy. Matzner (n.d.), quoting Engels, assumes that the division of family roles between men and women started with the development of hunting and agriculture. The earliest families were hunting families, who often led a nomadic life, forcing pregnant women to stay at
home and thus be responsible for home life and developing agriculture. Despite the importance of agriculture, men held authority since they were the bearers of the old hunting culture, which gave them control over the family’s economy. This division of labour and financial authority led to male dominance in family life and thus patriarchy (Matzner, n.d. and Riddiough, 1986). The term patriarchy itself, Matzner (n.d., par. 1) explains, “literally means ‘the rule of father’.”

Some influential scientists and philosophers, such as Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and Charles Darwin, among others (Bressler), have declared that women are inferior to men. Morton (2008), quoting Freud, states that people’s attitudes and identity are determined by their innate anatomic essence. Sexuality, according to Freud, provides a biological explanation of the social and cultural differences between men and women. This implies that men and women are given different social and cultural roles, whereby women’s life is governed by two things: societal ethics and the principles of patriarchy. Such a society deems, as Matzner explains, that “real men” are attracted to “real women”. The term ‘real’ describes the communal expectation that men and women act in conformity to their biologically determined gender roles, which are fixed and inevitable. To facilitate the smooth running of society, any deviation is discouraged. Those who break the societal norms will be sanctioned by the authorities or by other people who support the established cultural values (Hall and Neitz).

East-West

Since the stories discussed describe events taking place in Dickson County, USA, and Blora, Indonesia, specifically Central Java, the term East-West refers in particular to the United States of America and Central Java, Indonesia. Hofstede’s IBM study identifies the USA as a country with a medium Power Distance Index (PDI); i.e. 40 on a scale of between 11—104, while Indonesia, at 78, is almost twice as high as the USA. Hofstede (28) defines PDI as “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.” Consequently, Indonesians are much more tolerant of unequal power distribution than Americans. The same research reveals the USA as the most individualist society, having an Individualism Index (IDV) of 91 on a scale of 6-91, whereas Indonesia is only 14 on the scale. This finding puts Indonesia into the group of collectivist cultures.
American Society

With the spread of the Industrial Revolution, which began in Great Britain in the 1700s, to North America, especially the northeastern United States, in the mid 1800s, the community-based social relationships characterizing American society were gradually replaced by individual goals and achievement (Bernard, 1962). Bernard elaborates that "the nineteenth century industrialization demanded individuals to function as individuals; [...] They had to be independent; they had to be self-reliant; they had to have initiative" (17). As a result, individuals focused on their own achievement, shaping them to be selfish and self-centered. This tendency characterizes individualistically-based communities as "societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family" (Hofstede 51). In addition, McFeeters (2003) maintains that members of an individualist culture are independent of their in-groups. They put their goals before their groups' and act mainly based on their own attitudes. Individualism, in Ham's (2000) view, creates loneliness, isolation, and alienation, which are intensified as family ties are also weakening. Tamara Hareven, in Coben and Ratner, expresses many Americans' concern with the breakdown in family life which has been an ongoing factor in American history since the period of pre-industrial America, when family life is believed to have reached its golden age.

Supporting Tamara Hareven, Hofstede explains the relationship between Power Distance and family ties. Identified as a society with a little-below-average PDI, America reveals a family structure characterized by parents who will treat their children as equals as soon as possible, in order to foster their offsprings' immediate ability to take care of their own affairs (Hofstede). To people of other cultures American family ties are often considered shockingly cold and distant. Despite the awareness of the great impact of this phenomenon on individuals, this principle is retained, even intensified. Research done by Bellah, et al. (156) finds that "American society is becoming very self-oriented or very individual-oriented: what's in it for me, how much do I get out of it, am I getting everything I'm entitled to in my life?" They suggest two reasons for this increasing tendency toward individualism. First, most Americans believe they can do everything themselves by working and thinking hard enough. As a result, they feel they don't need God or other people. In addition, Bellah, et al. explain that the most deeply held American value is probably freedom, which means "not having other people's values, ideas, or styles of life forced upon one, [...] freedom from—from people
who have economic power over you, from people who try to limit what you
can do or say" (23, 25). Second, the nation's involvement in war seems to
have enhanced individualism. Quoting John Maynard Keynes, Baritz adds
that the war was assumed to have emotionally exhausted particularly young
Americans so that they turned away from the public domain "to attend to
themselves" (181), thus strengthening the already entrenched individualism.
Indeed, so deep is individualism internalized in American society that F.
Scott Fitzgerald recalled American life in the mid-twenties as one which
"[...] was largely a personal matter" (Baritz).

In line with individualism, Magnis-Suseno (1984) maintains that
western ethics allows people to believe and act according to their conscience.
Acting in conformity with societal norms is not absolutely obligatory because
western ethics acknowledges that one may feel obliged to do something
against the society, particularly when there is a serious violation to justice or
one's essential rights. Supporting Magnis-Suseno, Bellah, et al. (25) propose
that the American tradition considers "justice as equal opportunities for
every individual to pursue whatever he or she understands by happiness."
Hence, it focuses on individual interests and goals rather than the group's.

Javanese Society

Scoring 14 out of 91 on the Individualism Index and 78 out of 104 on the
Power Distance Index, Indonesia is rated as a collectivist culture with high
power distance (Hofstede). Hofstede (57) defines collectivist cultures as
"societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong,
cohesive groups, which throughout people's lifetime, continue to protect them
in exchange for unquestioning loyalty" (51). The demand for "unquestioning
loyalty" makes the collectivist Indonesians subordinate themselves to society.
Hence, the individual's interest should come after the group's interests.

A part of Indonesian society, the Javanese community is socially divided
into two strata, the priayi and the wong cilik (peasants). Priayi is believed to
come from the word yayi, meaning the king's younger brother (Kartodirdjo
et.al., 1987). They quote Van Niel, who describes priayi as an elite social
group in the 1900s, which included anybody who was higher than the
peasants and to some extent leading, influencing, organizing, and guiding
the peasants as well as the society. As a social group, priayi is characterized
by customs of propriety as reflected in the hierarchical Javanese language, as
well as their title of nobility, the design of their houses, their outfits and their
formal attire, among other customs. Geertz (1960) adds the binary opposed concepts of alus (refined) and kasar (rude) are central to priyayi. The priyayi must possess a refined attitude; they must be pure, polite, gentle, delicate, humble, and civilized, and this differentiates them from the peasants.

Being hierarchical and collectivist, with a high PDI, the Javanese society emphasizes respect (Magnis-Suseno, 1984). On the other hand, it also values the principle of rukun (harmonious social appearance). To maintain a harmonious social appearance, children in collectivist culture are taught that their personal identity is based on the group's identity since values are mostly implicitly learned in childhood (Kameo, 2007). Geertz (1985) states that Javanese children learn how to be respectful by being wedi (afraid), isin (feeling guilty), and sungkan (shy, embarrassed), which implies obedience to the elderly (See also Hongladarom, 2004). To keep the social harmony, a collectivist culture discourages differences, open disagreement, and conflict (Hongladarom; Kameo). Conflict may cause one to lose face, which is a great shame to a Javanese. The principle of respect should also be present in the Javanese social relationships (Endraswara, 2003). Endraswara elaborates that even members of the upper class (priyayi) should treat members of the lower class (wong cilik) respectfully to maintain the social harmony. Culturally, a priyayi has to be a benevolent protector of the peasants.

The principles of rukun and respect also characterize the western social relationships (Magnis-Suseno, 1984). Moreover, the Javanese attitude of nrima, that is, to accept everything good or bad without complaining or protesting, also exists in the western ethics. However, the principle of nrima may be developed into a religious attitude of pasrah or being submissive (Endraswara). Unlike the western concept, by being submissive, a Javanese shows a belief in destiny, which means that their life has already been decided.

On the other hand, Magnis-Suseno observes that virtue, justice, compassion, and honesty, which are considered the most refined values in western ethics can also be found in Javanese ethics. He concludes that the Javanese ethics focuses more on wisdom, on a wise attitude and behaviour. It is important for a Javanese to act in conformity with the societal moral demands, in order to support social harmony. In short, the logic or rationality of the Javanese ethic is based on an understanding that since humans are completely incapable of changing their lives, which have been previously decided for them, they had better not disturb the process of life for the sake of compassion, justice, or anything. Instead, a Javanese is obliged to maintain social harmony. On the other hand, as Magnis-Suseno further elaborates,
the western ethic allows people to believe in their conscience. As previously commented, acting in conformity to the societal norms is not absolutely obligatory because the western ethic acknowledges that one may feel obliged to do something against the society, particularly when there is a serious violation to justice or one's essential rights.

Inem as a woman in a patriarchal, collectivist culture

Inem is a domestic helper working in Gus Muk's house, which is a family of prijai. She is a happy girl although she has to work even in her childhood. Her suffering starts when she is eight, since that means she has entered the age of marriage. Her parents accept Markaban's family's proposal. Markaban, who is 17 and a son of a cattle trader, lives in a neighboring village. Inem's parents do not dare to decline the proposal, feeling afraid that there will be no more young men who would like to marry Inem (Toer 46). Having a daughter who becomes an old maid will cause the family to lose face, which is a big shame to them. This implies that Inem's parents are actually under the pressure of societal values, so that they seem to have no choice but to accept the proposal. The parents then pass on the social pressure to their daughter, creating family pressure on her—although Inem feels happy to get married, imagining herself wearing new, pretty clothes and make-up because that is what marriage means to her. Besides, since Inem's family is a particularly low-class one, Inem's marriage is viewed as the only way to ease the family financial burden. Koentjaraningrat (1983) maintains that children have a largely economic significance to lower class Javanese, while to the prijai (upper class families), children bring warmth and happiness. Thus, daughters of a lower class Javanese family are considered objects, first by their parents and later by their husbands.

The wedding celebration itself means suffering for Inem. She cries so that her tears spoil her make-up because she actually wants to urinate, but is afraid to tell anyone about it, let alone to leave her nuptial seat (50). Leaving her nuptial seat means disturbing the wedding ceremony and celebration, thus breaking the harmony. Besides, lower class people are not accustomed to speaking their mind nor expressing how they feel.

When the wedding celebration ends, other forms of suffering await Inem. The newly-married bride and her mother, but not her father or her husband, have to do batik work day and night to pay the family debt (51). Although poor, Inem's family is supposed to hold a wedding celebration that
lasts for seven days and nights. It is a common practice among the lower class Javanese to borrow money to finance a celebration or they may lose face for being unable to share their happiness with their community. When the gifts they receive at the celebration cannot repay their debt, they have to work harder to return the money.

More suffering comes from Inem’s husband, who only “wants to wrestle at night” (52).

In addition to that, quarrelling was often heard in that house. And once, when I was sleeping with Mother in her bed, a loud scream awakened me: “I won’t! I won’t!”

It was still night then. The screams were repeated again and again accompanied by the sound of blows and pounding on a door. I knew that the screams came from Inem’s mouth. (51-52)

To find a way to end her suffering, Inem turns to Mother, Gus Muk’s mother, her former employer. She cannot ask for her parents’ help because of the economic gap between her family and Markaban’s family. Mother, a priyayi and her former employer, should be her benevolent protector (Endraswara). The girl asks Mother to hire her back. Inem’s plea supports an assumption that she is happy working in Gus Muk’s family. In response, Mother, who also hears Inem’s screams at night and who never agreed to Inem’s getting married at the age of eight, nevertheless refuses to take Inem back because the girl is married. In addition, Mother advises Inem to serve her husband better and faithfully, “no matter whether he is good or bad [...] because after all he is your husband.” If she fails to be a good wife, she will be cursed by her ancestors (52).

As Marzner (n.d.) elaborates, both men and women are expected to act according to their biologically determined gender roles, which are fixed and inevitable, so as not to disturb the social harmony. Inem’s role as a wife is therefore fixed. She is responsible for Markaban’s physical and psychological welfare regardless of how he treats her. Mother even advises Inem to use every possible moment to care for her husband’s safety and health. She should also pray for him in her spare time (52). In contrast, Markaban has no responsibility for his wife’s physical and psychological welfare. More than that, he seems to have the right to do anything to Inem, including beating her if he is not satisfied (54). A husband’s sole responsibility is earning a living, which, in the case of Inem’s father, seems not to be obligatory either.
When Inem has got divorced, she again visits her benevolent protector for help. Mother once refused to employ her because she was married; but now her marital status is not an obstacle anymore.

"Why did you separate from him?"
She did not reply.
"Did you fail to be a good wife to him?" [...] 
"Yes, ma'am, I did everything you advised me to."
"Well, then, why did you separate?" (54).

It turns out that Inem actually experiences two kinds of oppression in her marriage. One is her husband’s oppression; the second is the social pressure. Since her marriage does not last, it must be due to her failure to be a good wife to Markaban. If not, why should Markaban beat and divorce her? At first, Mother does not even believe that Markaban would beat a little girl like Inem (54). When Mother is forced to believe the reality, she defends Markaban by arguing that he must have had a reason for beating his wife.

"Beat you? He beat a little child like you?"
"I did everything I could to be a good wife, ma’am. And when he beat me and I was in pain—was that part of being a good wife...? [...]"
"Maybe you failed in some way after all in your duty to him. A husband would never have the heart to beat a wife who was really and truly a good wife to him" (54)

The principles of patriarchy do apply in Inem’s marriage. The social institution which is established in the name of love is a male-dominated and male-identified environment, in which Inem is very much oppressed. She is only an object in her marriage—an object to satisfy her husband’s sexual desire, to please his ego, to care for his physical welfare, and to be a target of his anger. Thus, as soon as Inem is married, she stops being a human being who has her own desires, feelings, and principles, because she has to ignore them all to function as a good wife (Morton; Matzner). If she is truly and really a good wife, she will get a reward: not to be beaten by her husband.

Mother once refused to re-employ Inem because she was married. Now that Inem is divorced, her marital status cannot be used as an excuse for not giving her the chance anymore. However, when Inem asks Mother to take her back, “there is no hesitation in Mother’s reply” (55). This time
Mother refuses to hire the young divorcée because of propriety. It is socially inappropriate for a divorcée like Inem to be in a house where there are many grown-up boys because it may disturb the harmonious social appearance. When Inem confirms the reason, Mother answers, “Yes, that's the way it is, Inem” (55). Despite her pity and concern with Inem's fate and suffering, Mother prefers to maintain the social harmony, as that is the main task of a Javanese (Magnis-Suseno, 1984). Therefore, even after she is not bound in a marriage, Inem still suffers because of the social pressure Mother would experience if she helps Inem.

Realizing her hopeless position, Inem returns to her parents' house without saying anything or protesting, as if she realizes that her life has been destined and that she should be submissive (Endraswara). Since then, “her scream is often heard. She can be beaten by anyone: her brother, her uncle, her neighbour. Yet, Inem never again comes to our house” (55). After the end of her marriage, Inem suffers another family and social pressure. A daughter has an economic value for a low class Javanese family. However, being a divorcée, Inem has no economic value. On the contrary, she is now an economic burden for her family; therefore she can be beaten by her brother as well as uncles—or by anyone in the extended family. To her society, she is an embarrassing figure. She has failed to be a good wife to her husband and hence is divorced. Failing to act in conformity to her supposed gender role, Inem disturbs the social harmony and is a deviant. Therefore, she deserves the sanction which is imposed by those who support the established values and norms (Hall and Neitz).

**Minnie Foster as a woman in a patriarchal, individualist culture**

Minnie Foster definitely has two contrasting lives, before and after she marries John Wright. In her youth, Minnie used to be a cheerful, lively girl who wore pretty clothes and sang in the choir (Glaspell 147). As Mrs. Wright, she is busily occupied with endless farm duties, as the other farmers' wives also are. Minnie's friend, Martha Hale, for example, has thought of visiting Minnie time and time again, but the household and farm chores, as well as her children, have kept her from doing it, and in time she forgets about Minnie (144-145). It is a full year after her last visit that she appears in Minnie's house—this time not to visit her, but to take some personal things for her friend, who is suspected of having murdered her husband (145).
If Minnie used to be a lively girl with an active life, she now lives in an isolated house located in a hollow and without a telephone; thus, she is cut off from the "outside world." If Minnie Foster used to sing in the choir, she is now all by herself during the day and meets only her husband in the evenings because he is at work all day. Her loneliness is reflected in the environment she lives in: a lonesome-looking place, surrounded by lonesome-looking poplar trees (139). If Minnie Foster used to wear pretty clothes, Minnie Wright wears shabby clothes, because her husband is stingy, and she does not have authority over the family finances, which automatically leads to a dominating position in the husband-wife relationship (Matzner). Her shabby appearance makes her keep very much to herself during her 20 years of husband-dominated and husband-identified marriage.

"I could've come," retorted Mrs. Hale shortly. "I stayed away because it weren't cheerful—and that's why I ought to have come. I"—she looked around—"I've never liked this place. Maybe because it's down in a hollow and you don't see the road. I don't know what it is, but it's a lonesome place, and always was. I wish I had come over to see Minnie Foster sometimes. I can see now—". She did not put it into words. (152)

Although John Wright is a good man who keeps his word, pays his debts, and does not drink (152), he has definitely internalized the principles of patriarchy and individualism. Keeping his word, paying his debts, and keeping away from alcohol are three characteristics of a 'good man' in an individualist, patriarchal culture. He puts tasks over relationships (Hofstede). Unfortunately, a good man does not necessarily make a good husband. John Wright seems to have treated Minnie just like the other appliances in the house, which exist to ensure that life goes smoothly there. This shows his male-orientation; in short, he considers his wife an object. In effect, John fails to notice the contrast between the life Minnie used to have and the one she has now. There is no appreciation that she is still using the broken stove; in fact, John may not even know that the stove is broken. Located in the kitchen, a stove is a "ladies' thing," which is not a man's concern. There is no understanding of how lonely Minnie must feel during the day, living in a house in a hollow where she cannot even see the road, and without any company.

Despite her loneliness and psychological suffering, Minnie does not turn to any friends, but keeps to herself. Her attitude reflects how she was raised, that is, to be able to take care of her own affairs as soon as she can
(Hofstede), and that is how she has become. To ease her loneliness, she buys a canary. The singing bird may remind her of her girlish days singing in the choir, as well as being her friend during the day, when she is all alone at home. Unfortunately John Wright kills the canary (151-155).

Raised and grown up in an individualistic patriarchal society, John Wright is accustomed to think of "I" (Hofstede) and to be a self-oriented, dominant person because he is a man (Matzner). Worse, the loose relationships among individuals and the culture of looking only after oneself do not give him much chance to exercise his empathy either, so that he is not sensitive to others. He may never even think of putting himself in somebody else's shoes, let alone a woman's.

A 'victim' of the individualist culture similar to her husband, Minnie finally takes the initiative to find justice for herself. Bellah, et al. (25) write that "our American traditions encourage us to think of justice as a matter of equal opportunities for every individual to pursue whatever he or she understands by happiness." To Minnie, happiness means getting rid of the source of her suffering. Twenty years of keeping a relatively solitary, labourious life to herself is more than enough. However, despite her direct way of ending her suffering, she does it quietly and perfectly. That she has practiced it when she is working on a quilt implies her long-term initiative, and thus well-preparedness.

"Why, look at this one...."

"The sewing", said Mrs. Peters, in a troubled way. "All the rest of them have been so nice and even—but—this one. Why, it looks as if she didn't know what she was about!"

One piece of the crazy sewing remains unripped. (150-151)

That crazy sewing, the unrippable one, is the proof of her anger and protest at being treated as if, although she was there, yet she did not exist.

Minnie's friends, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters, the sheriff's wife, notice the messy knot, which is the proof that Minnie has strangled her husband to death. Both the women are able to feel empathy to Minnie Foster because they are also married women, who know exactly how it is being in the patriarchal institution of marriage. Therefore, they decide to cover up the homicide and act in accordance with their conscience, which is allowed in western ethics (Magnis-Suseno, 1984), although it means acting against the law. Minnie has never asked them to help her, but they take the initiative themselves. They are also enabled to save Minnie because of their husbands'
arrogant attitudes, which make the two men underestimate kitchen things as 'ladies things' and thus trivial (144).

In the two stories, the characters of Mother, on the one hand, and Minnie's friends, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters, on the other, have taken opposite attitudes in response to a woman's suffering. Inem is close to Mother; and Mother, even as a priayi, is supposed to be Inem's benevolent protector. Yet, Mother surrenders to the societal values and norms, reflecting her strong tendency to give her group's interest the priority. Acting against such norms would put her prestige and status as a priayi at risk, as well as ostracising her from her group (Kartodirdjo, et al.; Kameo). Besides, hiring Inem, the divorcée, back means disturbing the social harmony and behaving against propriety. Despite her concern with Inem's suffering, Mother's decision reveals the strong grip collectivist and patriarchal society has on its members; as well, it implies that for the sake of her family prestige and face, Mother has acted as an agent of patriarchy herself. On the other hand, although Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters live in a patriarchal society that is similar, they are raised to place individual interests over the group's; thus they are taught to express how they feel and what they think, to be honest, although it may hurt (McFeeters). If Mr. Peters, the sheriff, finds out that his wife has hidden the proof, he will feel much more than just hurt. But regardless of the possible risks, the two women decide to save their friend. By responding to other women's suffering as women, these three women's decisions reveal the influence of cultural internalization upon individual members of a society.

Indonesian women today

Written almost sixty years ago, "Inem" expresses Pramoedya Ananta Toer's response to the fate of Indonesian, particularly Javanese, women at that time. Since then, the nation has lived under three different Orders, namely the Old Order (1945—1966), the New Order (1966—1998), and the Reform Order (Order of Reformasi), which started in 1998. The Reform Order, in particular, has gained Indonesia international praise for its much improved democracy. It has also seen Indonesia surpass the USA in terms of giving its women roles in politics. While Hillary Clinton recently failed to become the first female president of the USA, Indonesia has given its best woman, Megawati, a chance to be vice president, and she went on to lead the country upon the withdrawal of Abdurrahman Wahid as president. The present Order has also enabled freedom of speech and self-expression, resulting
in the public’s familiarity with matters that used to be considered taboos, such as transgender lifestyles and homosexuality. More surprisingly, the publication of Ayu Utami’s novel, *Saman*, in which she openly and vividly describes sexual expression, has invited praise rather than curses, resulting in the release of similar novels by other female authors.

The changes taking place in the society seem to have moved Indonesia toward a more individualistic and less patriarchal culture. However, some recent events taking place within the nation have forced us to scrutinize the actual position of women in the society.

In April 2008, the Jakarta City Government revealed their plan to provide women-only busways to prevent female riders from being sexually-harassed on common busways. The plan implies the Jakarta authorities’ way of thinking: “If women do not take the special busways, it’s their own fault if they are sexually harassed”. Such a premise blames women for becoming victims due to their sexuality; as well, it is as if the authorities had legalized sexual harassment of women on non-women-only busways. It also implies that women are considered the weaker sex, who need the protection of men and the authorities to be sexually safe when riding the bus.

A more recent event took place with the passage of the Anti-Pornography Law by the House of Representatives on October 30, 2008 - despite the nationwide controversy and rejection of at least four provinces: Yogyakarta, Bali, North Sulawesi, and West Papua. The passage of this law has put women in a legally more disadvantageous position. The law includes a clause which allows “public participation in preventing pornography” (“Groups…”, November, 2008). The clause states that the public may report “suspected instances of pornography to the police, and must be in accordance with the regulations.” Thus, the law not only permits the government to decide how women should dress in public places, but also gives authority to the public over women’s private lives. Interestingly, the State Minister for Women’s Affairs, Meutia Hatta, supported the anti-pornography law, reasoning that the law would protect women and children from pornography.

The most recently protested event concerning women is that of Pujiono Cahyo Widianto, a *kiai* (cleric) from Semarang, Central Java, who took Lutfiana Ulfia, a 12-year old girl, as his second wife. Responding to many people’s condemnation of his decision to marry a child, Pujiono, a wealthy calligraphy businessman, ignorantly announced his plan to marry two more girls, one nine and the other seven years old. Suryakusuma (November, 2008) states that Pujiono has violated not only the Criminal Code, which says that “any sexual involvement with a minor” - anyone under 18 - is a
crime, but also the 1974 Marriage Law, which ordains that "a woman must be at least 16 to marry" (par. 10). Nevertheless, Komnas Perlindungan Anak (the National Commissioner for the Protection of Children) only went so far as to request that Pujiono let Lutsiana live with her parents for four years before he takes her back as his wife. The Commissioner did not prevent the marriage, nor prosecute Pujiono for marrying a child. Neither did the Central Java Provincial Government nor the Indonesian Police take any legal actions against Pujiono, as if the state does not consider Pujiono’s breaking the 1974 Marriage Law a serious crime.

Conclusion

Although Inem and Minnie suffer because they are women living in male-dominated societies, they experience slightly different kinds of pressure due to the different societal cultures they live in. Inem has to bear family and social pressure before and after her marriage. While she is Markaban’s wife, she has to bear the collectivist family pressure of patriarchy. On the other hand, Minnie Foster only suffers from individual family pressure, in this case, her husband’s oppression. In conformity with the way she is raised, Minnie turns to herself to find an escape. When her canary is killed, she finds justice by killing the source of her unhappy life, her husband; in this way, she fights against her unhappiness directly. Although she has always coped with her problem herself, her friends, who understand her suffering, dare to save her because the individualist culture allows its members to follow their conscience and put individual interest before their group’s. In effect, Minnie is finally freed from family pressure without having to suffer either social or legal punishments.

As soon as Inem enters the age of marriage, her family is socially pressured to accept a marriage proposal, lest their daughter becomes an old maid. This social pressure is then transmitted to Inem because her family’s prestige and face are in her hand. In marriage, Inem becomes a victim of the male-dominated culture, in which she has to serve, please, and satisfy her husband regardless of her own will, feeling, and happiness. Worse, she also has to bear her husband’s anger and his beatings whenever he is dissatisfied. By asking Mother to take her back and questioning the way she is treated, Inem expresses her protest against her “fate” and attempts to free herself from her husband’s oppression. She goes about her rebellion quietly and very indirectly. Her way of dealing with her personal problem conforms to the culture she is raised in, which emphasizes
social harmony and which has taught her to always put her own interest after her in-group's. She also depends on the power figure of Mother to save her. Mother similarly responds to Inem's problem and plea according to the way she is socially conditioned. To maintain the harmonious social appearance, Mother cannot hire a young divorcee like Inem in a house with grown-up boys. As a divorcee, Inem suffers both family and social pressures: she is a financial burden to her family, and she holds a lower position than women in her society normally do because she is divorced. Living in a collectivist culture, in which one should still be able to expect protection from one's in-group, Inem has to be submissive to her tragic fate.

Similar to Inem, Indonesian women today apparently still have to struggle for a better position in culture and society. Recent events—the Jakarta City Government's plan for women-only busways, the passage of the Anti-Pornography Law, and the case of the child bride—prove that the more equal position Indonesian women enjoy in politics does not necessarily result in a more equal social and cultural position. This is rather surprising, since politics should be able to govern culture and society instead of the other way around. There are two possibilities for this anomaly. First, Indonesian women's position in the government is superficial; that is, they do not have the authority to make significant, influential decisions. Second, the female politicians do not use their positions to improve the traditional Indonesian women’s fate because they have culturally internalized the role as agents of patriarchy themselves, and do not dare to fight against the societal norms. Is it possible that they are merely unaware of their, and other Indonesian women's, inferior social and cultural positions?

As long as male authorities, supported by female ones, plan, regulate, and decide, the life of Indonesian women will not step out of the old tradition.

References:


