



Article

# Women's Rights and Colonization in The Short Story of The Jakarta Post

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## A B S T R A C T

Right after the fall of Suharto's regime, Indonesia has undergone tremendous changes in almost all aspects of life: political, economic, social, cultural, and possibly ideological lives. The changes bring new breaths to Indonesian future, especially in the area of women's rights. This article discusses the issue of women's rights in Indonesia based on a textual analysis. The purpose of this writing is to investigate the representation of women's rights issues in some stories of The Jakarta Post, one of the most popular media which has also played an important role in popularizing and spreading such issues. Postcolonial criticism is used to see how the stories portray the issues of women's rights, particularly gender equality and marginality. To study the issues, this analysis looks at two short stories: "Gender Equality" by Iwan Setiawan and "Street Smart Mom" by Eric Musa Piliang. The two stories represent the fact that Indonesian women fight against colonization for their rights in some different ways, as a smart wife and a poor street mother. The stories signal that Indonesian women struggle to escape from colonization through some actions such as moving forward to the center of power by maintaining superiority against men and living their lives as they wish in spite of being poor.

## INTRODUCTION

Studies on Indonesian poetry, drama, and prose on various topics such as human rights have become quite common phenomena in Indonesian literary circle. However, not many of these studies are focused on short story, a subgenre of fiction which so far seems uncared for. Scholars who deal with such topics include Ferdinal (2013, 2015a; 2015b), Aveling (2010), Mahayana (2006), Danerek (2005), Tahqiq (1995), Thahar (2008), Adilla (2007) and Prihatmi (1985). In Indonesia, media such as newspaper as one of the most popular media has also played an important role in popularizing and spreading some different issues such as the issues of women's rights which are published in different forms: books, magazines, newspapers, and journals. Short story is one kind of literary works

which is widely available in the media although its presence is rather underestimated. Its existence in newspaper has given a new phenomenon in the development of Indonesian literature.

Almost every newspaper has a special space for short story to be consumed by its readers every week, which is usually provided on Sunday edition. Due to its appearance which is only once a week, the themes of the published short stories also vary from week to week. Among big issues exposed is the problem of women's rights experienced by Indonesian. The issues of women's rights are such big issues to cover. To mention some of them in Indonesian context, the issues deal with marginality, materialism, freedom of expression and gender. In this writing, the discussion is on gender equality which is an effort of Indonesian

women to get their equal rights against men. Short story in newspaper provides useful insights and information into the construction of practicality and handling of the problem of gender in the era of post Suharto. This article aims at discussing two short stories published by *The Jakarta Post*, an English-language Indonesian newspaper to examine how the issue of women's rights is exposed practically in Indonesian newspaper after the regime of Suharto.

## METHOD

In this discussion the following short stories are revisited: "Gender Equality" (12 November 2006) by Iwan Setiawan and "Street Smart Mom" (8 February 2009) by Eric Musa Piliang. The two short stories are among many short stories published in *The Jakarta Post* about women in two different years. The stories were written by two male writers. The two stories are purposely selected to see how men see women's heart and women's problems. The stories basically deal with how women see things about marriage, relationship between men and women, and sacredness of family. The selection of the two stories is not meant to represent the wholeness of women's heart in the main scopes mentioned above but it purposes to start a line of enquiry in the field of short story criticism in Indonesian literature.

## Literature, Women and Colonization

The existence of postcolonial theory cannot be separated from the wish of its theorists to challenge the supremacy of colonial ideology (western ideology) which penetrates into the vessels of heart and culture of the colonized people. Western ideology, accompanied by its power and strength, tries to maintain its domination in the colonized territory in all aspects of life politically, socially, economically and culturally. Its superiority in those aspects has been scratching its claws in the heart, mind, and culture of the colonized. The scratches have been widely seen and will possibly multiply in line with the development of the global era. Indonesia, for example, is one of the colonies of the Western Power (Dutch) which can be the best related example to see the presence of this type of ideology.

For about 3.5 centuries, Indonesia had been under the authority of the Dutch until Indonesia

proclaimed its independence on August 17th, 1945. The going of the Dutch out of the territory of Indonesia has been the starting point of Indonesian formal independence. The independence has freed this nation from colonization physically. Physical freedom does not necessarily make Indonesians get their independence in all aspects of life, by which, an Algerian thinker, Franz Fanon calls it total freedom, namely freedom that considers every aspect of life. Being free from physical freedom, Indonesian people have again been colonized by western powers in the forms of ideology and culture both by England with its language and The United States of America with its global culture (neo-colonialism). This ideology penetrates into the heart and then action of Indonesians. Indonesians do not follow their true heart but consider what their colonizers think and what they are supposed to do in relation to the thoughts of their colonizers.

In all aspects of life such as ideology, social life, economy and culture, Indonesia seems unable to really become free from western values. Generally Indonesians are still dependent and rely on the values inherited from their colonizers in which they imitate and hybridize them for their own sake. Along the history of Indonesian literature, there have been works which represent changes in the way how women see the world. They have shown themselves, gained their own place, and begun to make path for themselves. These improvements have created new trends, behaviors, and actions among them. Despite their getting the new position among men women still seem really independent in a sense that their actions are sometimes twisted, modified, and surrounded by their own heart which still believes in their tradition. Women have been brave in expressing what they could not do before. What became taboo before can now be their menu. Sex for example used to be a topic which was only around the domain of men. Women just became the object of discussion. Their sexual consumptions such as body, taste, behavior, and willingness are described and directed by men while they became spectators. They were just able to see how they were treated without any will or authority to correct moreover to protest against men's description about them. Yet, women are brave to expose even braver than men in expressing themselves even though in the description their ambivalence, doubt, and indecisiveness are still seen.

Katrin Bandel (2006: xvii) writes that in Indonesian contemporary literature, “women” and “sex” are two important issues: women as writers and sex as a trendy theme of literary works. She further cynically addresses her disagreement with media that often say that it is easier for women to get published moreover if she is beautiful or if the work talks about sex written by women, it will be published. To respond to the comment by mass media, she seems to argue that the existence of women writer among the circle of male writers is not fully welcome yet. There is still resistance among them regarding the coming of women writers into male arena. Her concern deals with how literary observers treat literature particularly works by women. So far women become the object of men’s writings where men portray them from male perspective. Yet when women come up depicting themselves, men’s world and the relationship between men and women, men seem to disagree.

Thank to the Reform Order which enables writers to express their feelings, ideas, and criticism on any subject without any fear of being prohibited, caught up, or jailed for what they have written. Women who used to be doubly colonized can now breathe fresh air of what Indonesians have been hoping to feel during the reign of Suharto. When men are free from tyrannical government, women just get half of what men get namely freedom of expression but not freedom from male domination.

### “Gender Equality”

In relation to the colonization of the mind and culture, Iwan Setiawan in “Gender Equality” tries to expose the theme of ambivalence among Indonesian women whose heart has been shaken by western culture and ideology. The story which is centered on the ambivalence of moral values of Indonesian women can relatively give us some information that the sacred family values in Indonesia have moved from sacredness to freedom, the one enjoyed by westerners. Young (in Ashcroft, et al, 2002:12) writes that ambivalence means a continual fluctuation between wanting one thing and wanting its opposite and it also relates to a simultaneous attraction and repulsion from an object, action, or person. In general, we may understand that this could be a common thing a person does. Someone can be in doubt in choosing, acting and doing something as long as it concerns

him or herself. Indonesia, which used to be known for its tight norms, does not want its people to put personal wishes upon moral values. Moral values should be given the first priority as written in The Five Principles of *Pancasila* which sounds “just and civilized humanity.” Civilized is a highly praised word by this nation, which is often contradicted to complete freedom. All aspects of life should be based on civilization where achievement and happiness are measured not by personal excitement but by someone’s acceptability in a society.

The story that provides some binary oppositions talks about a husband and a wife with many basic differences: the wife pretty, the husband common; the wife smart; the husband average; the wife well educated, the husband average; the wife financially good, the husband poor; the wife loves going out, the husband likes being at home; and the wife a doctoral degree holder activist, the husband an elementary school teacher. Their marriage condition fluctuates from traditional to modern situation where spouse’s role changes drastically from the conventional one. After Gin, the wife, becomes a famous feminist activist, she does not have enough time for her family anymore. Household is handled by her husband, Joko, who conducts his dual roles: a mother and a father for his children. Their communication still runs through telephone.

Glancing back at the era of 1920s, we are reminded by *Salah Asuhan*, a novel by Abdul Muis. This work talks about a man whose education is provided by a Dutch school. Finishing his study, his behaviors become more European-like than those of the Dutchmen themselves. The novel concentrates more on mimicking behaviors of the Dutch where Hanafi, the main character, feels that western culture (the Dutch) is better and the best. Anything that belongs to the colonizer is all above what his nation has. He replaces his own culture with that of his colonizer. He behaves as if he were a European just in order that he can be accepted by the Dutch especially by his lover, Corrie, a Dutch-French woman. Their later marriage does not cause them to be happy but to suffer because Europeans never think of Hanafi as a European. He is still an islander while Corrie is alienated by her European friends due to her marrying a native man (Rani: 1999, 208).

Rather different from what is depicted by *Salah*

*Asuhan*, where colonization felt by Hanafi is both physical and spiritual during Dutch colonization, this story by Iwan Setiawan presents that colonization happens not only during the era of colonization but also after it. Colonization of this type takes place in the individual psyche, precisely in the cultural identity possessed by Indonesian people. This short story exposes colonial ideology which lies deep in Indonesian culture by looking at the colonial ideology which dances above Indonesian culture. Freedom is still unavailable in the deep heart of Indonesians.

Colonial psychology, as commonly felt by those who lived during the colonial time, comes into the mind of the colonized unconsciously (unconscious mind) in the forms of behaviors or characters which then gradually destroy the norms existing in the hearts of the colonized. As it is illustrated by Gin in this story, we can understand that Gin's psyche has corroded. The change in Gin's heart is not done consciously but unconsciously. The conquest or colonization that takes place in Gin is what Nandy in Gandhi (2006) considers as the colonization of mind, soul, and culture. Her mind has been colonized by western norms. Family values in Indonesian culture that already exist in her heart begin to fade and mix with western norms which she learns, sees, feels, understands and dreams so much that her soul starts to doubt her own social norms. That is why her mind is split between maintaining her family appropriately and enjoying her freedom up to the sky as she has been dreaming so far.

Double personality as experienced by Gin is basically not new to some Indonesians especially those who live in big cities like Jakarta, where this story takes place. Jakarta is one of the cities in Indonesia which is full of complexities in all aspects of life. Any type of people live here: from the rich to the poor, from the good to the worst, from the honest to the liars, from the sincere to the disobedient, and from the one who works hard to maintain his family to the one who likes playing with other sex and forgetting his family. Many people in this city experience colonization and domination. Women who have been colonized and dominated by men are those who have suffered the most. So far, they have been trained to live in two bodies: male and female. They have experienced masculinity as well

as constructed femininity (Ferdinal, 2001). The victimization of women happens not only to women in households but also women in workplace. Such victimization happens due to a variety of roles a woman has gone through: 1) a human being, 2) a wife, 3) a mother, 4) a worker, and 5) a member of society (Arbain, 2001: 6-7). The five roles are inseparable. Differently, Gin's case is a form of personality that is not quite common in Indonesian context in which her soul floats between the West and the East. In one hand, she expects harmonious family so much where each member is bound by the cultural norms of her society: her husband loves and respects her and her children grow up properly in a Jakarta's family whose members respect, support, and love each other and where there is no secret and affair except complete trust and honesty. On the other hand, she also longs for personal freedom where there is no norm to bind her. She wants to fly high to the sky. Reasoning that they live in a modern era where there is no more bar that can hinder their movement of life, she can truly benefit from the situation in order that she can make her dream come true to make herself free from male domination. Gin's action in this story is an example of a life episode of Indonesian women who try to reconstruct Indonesian cultural identity about woman existence among male domination.

Iwan, in this story, attempts to criticize Indonesian women particularly and Indonesian people generally that colonization of the mind and soul keeps going on as long as Indonesians go away from their national ideology, as long as this nation still thinks that western ideology is better, and as long as this nation is still unable to say no to the culture that colonizes them. Whether it is realized or not, according to Iwan, there are three mainstreams how the West can persistently colonize this nation especially its women. They are education, career and roles of non government organization.

Through Gin in "Gender Equity," Iwan tries to remind this nation that the influence of colonization will surely endanger Indonesia especially in three ways. Firstly, to reach a just and civilized humanity in Indonesia as dreamt in Indonesian Constitution of 1945, Indonesian government needs to find solution in educational sector so as to give birth to great generations and smart people so that they come to the stage of expected prosperity. Gin



attempts to achieve such opportunity. Blessed by her intelligence and beauty, she is able to excel her friends at school so that she can continue her education to a famous university in the capital of Indonesia to study English literature, a field that can bring her to the world of the West.

The change of Gin's mind and soul starts not only from her introduction with English literature in Jakarta, but also from her being unhappy with what she has in high school when Joko, her boyfriend at that time, gets an impression that she does not like her name. *Waginah*, which is for her, sounds countrified, "He had met *Waginah* – her name, which is often made her embarrassed because it sounded "ndeso"—at a high school in Magelang." Her willingness to get accepted in a realm that appreciates personal existence makes her embarrassed by her name *Waginah*, which sounds very traditional and original. Her friends' names have been so widely westernized that traditional names are considered marginal. Gin's soul has been possessed by binary opposition: center/margin (Ashcroft, et.al: 36-37). She wants to be part of the center not just that of the margin. That is why the reconstruction of her name is required and she finally changes her name from *Waginah* to *Gin* in which this practice is now not new to Indonesians anymore. In the regions where western influence has been felt, we often hear that parents give their children western names not traditional ones. A child's name is perceived relatively widely good when it mimics or adopts the name of the West.

Gin's formal acquaintance with western ideology begins from her bachelor's degree education in a notable university in Jakarta where she studies English literature, an institution that becomes a tremendous tool for promoting western ideology, where civilization and discourse are written and spread all over the world, and where western civilization and discourse from some different western languages are united and rewritten into this language. In the department, she purposely makes an unlimited adventure into western ideology, the ideology which is identical to high civilization, the world which is associated with great advancement, and the world which is known as the cultural center. Gin's outing to the center ideology gets firmer and more appropriate after she receives a scholarship from a university in the U.S. to take women's

studies, a movement of thought that also becomes one of the motors of the West to fight for women's rights especially against men globally. Her study in the state has surely equipped her with enough knowledge and ability to become a true feminist in Indonesia. It is self-evident that she decides to take her doctoral degree in the same field at her alma mater.

Secondly, Gin's career as an academician and a feminist activist has opened ways for her to approach the colonizer's territory. Her profession has issued her a license to write in English, the language which is used by colonizers to write history. Her personal identity has upgraded her from the status of orality to that of history; from the margin to the center. Western tradition notes that only the nation that makes history can conquer the world while mystical nations can only understand themselves but they are unable to make the world move forward. In so doing mystical culture should be made historical. Due to her occupational demand, Gin needs to be able to prove that she can move her pen on paper to move from the margin to the center. Her education and academic achievement have made her a notably important writer in academic world, "Gin was now a well-known feminist. She had written two books and many articles on the feminist movement." Her success in making history again smoothens her way to enter the social world where she becomes a member of an NGO concentrating on human rights.

The success has truly upheld her to an honorable position, a center position where she is now the center of attention and the speaker, an information provider and analyst. This is a position that is normally part of the colonizer (West). The recognition has made her become someone who is always invited to deliver her opinions or ideas in her writings, and her ideas about feminism, a world which is now where she is. She has the opportunity to make her orality present itself in line with the history she writes; the orality that she never gets as a marginal being. Her immediate orality has created opportunities for her to speak, "She was invited to seminars, talk shows and even demonstrations to do with equality of the sexes." Her highest achievement is a yearly international award which is addressed to notable feminist figures, "The reporters came ... a week after Gin received an

international feminist movement award ...”

Gin’s chosen education and careers which go hand in hand with every marginal person whose dream to migrate to a place where she can express herself have been delayed. Here Iwan shows that colonial experience is not always bad for marginalized people so long as they can benefit from them. Colonial experience can make people feel marginalized because they feel underestimated or even make them more motivated to move closer to the colonizers or try to hybridize what they have with those of the colonizers.

Freedom that Gin feels is not a true one but it can be read as an ambivalent freedom where mimicry and hybridization form her characters. Gin does not feel happy with her own culture. She wants to be free and the freedom can be obtained by moving to the culture of the center; from the East (Indonesia) to the West. She cannot deny Indonesian culture but the culture fails to provide her with freedom she expects. That is why appropriation should be the best way to meet the two cultures by maintaining her local culture and following the culture that she thinks can make her dream come true. Her choice is feminism, an ideology that can make her free to get what she dreams. So she can land in two worlds: East and West. She still thinks of her real world in order that she is not uprooted from it. She cannot decide fully where to take: she is to live with her local culture or to move to another one belonging to the colonizer that promises freedom. She is adrift between staying and going, maintaining family solidity by setting aside all freedom she has already felt happy with or completely got away from her family enjoying western culture that gives her full freedom. The situation makes her eat the fruit of “Simalakama” (to eat it, mother dies; not to eat it, father dies). She cannot choose only one of them. Freedom and family are two things that should go together and to do that she needs to appropriate them.

The international phenomenon where Gin gets involved as a marginal figure is rather similar to what Ndi in Lewis Nkosi’s *Mating Birds* of South Africa (Ashcroft, et.al.2006:116-23). In this novel, it is depicted that Ndi, a black young man, is interested in a white woman who also has the same feeling as his. Their interestedness cannot be expressed naturally because they are different

peoples (the colonized and the colonizer). When they meet on the beach, they can only enjoy their closeness in mind until they get their orgasm by looking and miming at each other. Ndi’s will to be equal and accepted in the center (the white) can only be realized in his dreams not in reality. When he follows the woman home and watches every single action she does including the moment she undresses herself, he can really feel closer to her. Unfortunately the feeling of deep love that he has must be left forever because the woman cries when he is agape before the woman’s door and people accuse him of raping her because he is black and the woman white.

The difference that we see from the two stories lies in the way each character approaches the center. Ndi tries to do in his dumbness while Gin comes to the center writing history which is accepted by the center. Gin succeeds in reaching the center even though her acceptance is haunted by her soul to maintain her culture. On the other hand, Ndi has no courage to write history himself and even he has no orality to perform. There are only silence and speechlessness that he can act to approach the center (the white woman) although he has to fall down in the end because he is accused of raping her.

Gin can be a very successful figure in her career and family. She can be accepted in two opposite worlds: margin and center. The center adores her so much due to her reputable achievements. In one interview for a TV station, she proudly says:

“In our male-dominated society, women are still suffering from discriminatory laws and practices. We are now trying to secure more rights for women. You see the late Betty Friedman said, motherhood and housekeeping do not provide the fulfillment women want. Besides that, bringing up our kinds and doing the household chores aren’t only women’s responsibility. Men should share the duty.”

Gin can convince people how happy and harmonious her family is. She proudly allows journalists to come to her home to interview her husband and children. Joko is a husband who is so proud of his wife’s achievement. What his wife says is for him the truth that should not be denied because she has done lots of good things for women, “I’m very

proud of my wife because I believe that what my wife has been doing will benefit a lot of women who still suffer from sex discrimination.”

In the end of the day, Gin still spares some time to check what her family members do. It indicates that she still does her role as a mother and a wife. Gin has widely been freed from her housework. The responsibility has moved to the shoulders of her husband, Joko. Gin is busy outside with her career and social activities to which Joko never protests. Replacing her wife’s role as a mother is a sign of his accepting Gin’s reputation for the sake of gender equity. Joko can accept and approve her wife’s action and words heartily and faithfully although she just contacts him when their children are asleep. Their marriage runs harmoniously although their responsibilities change, but each can accept the condition. The change of function has taken place. Center has become margin and margin has become center. Hegemony is on Gin’s hand while Joko can just follow and accept what Gin says and does to make their household work normally. The happenings keep going on and it enables Gin to keep her “stay in the center” in order that she can lengthen her freedom even though the freedom has been stoved up by her love affair with her workmate when doing her activities as a speaker and committee member of an NGO for human rights.

Their household runs properly well physically but it does not work socially. Instead it grows in taboos. Gin feels guilty for what she has done, which is against the eastern norms. This is evident by her effort to make impression of honesty on her husband by calling his regularly although it is only once a day. In contrast, Joko also feels guilty because he cannot compete with Gin in terms of career and income, and achievement. So he can just listen and do what is said to him. That long silence that Joko experiences during her stay out of town encourages him to feel sincere with her spending nights in other woman’s hug. The chance and willingness have really succeeded in making him forget his role as family head and protector of the family, where Joko, on every occasion, expresses his love to his maid when his wife is out.

In general, we can read Gin’s behavior as a symbol of women’s role change in Indonesia. In line with today’s global change, more and more Indonesian

women come into and are made to come into work market. Bad economy of this nation has changed the social patterns of this society from the social pattern of *Sitti Nurbaya* to the pattern of character in Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening*. Indonesian men and women should be able to deal with the change. Women’s liberation from household’s traditional responsibilities to work place is not necessarily risky. Women should be able to expand their horizon and when they enter into job market, they deal with the situation and condition where new experiences come and make them also change. Because of the colonization they suffer so far, they want to be free. When they get it, supported by their knowledge, experience, and opportunity, they can be wrong or go too far from where they should do. Marriage does not function as a sacred institution any longer but it just functions as a loose tie that needs to be maintained as long as its couple still goes hand in hand and whenever they disagree each of them can decide to untie it. Each is willing to be in the center. The sacred marriage norms become less important than their freedom except when one of them can be in the margin becoming the one who is obedient to the marriage norms and forget freedom if the marriage fails to produce freedom.

### “Street Smart Mom”

Among postcolonial issues, marginality is one of the most common themes that we are quite familiar with. In Indonesia, the appearance of this one in literature can be detected in stories published in mass media. Newspaper is one of the most available media a writer prefers to publish a story like this. The observation of this theme in such stories is in itself interesting to be carried out due to its picturing the current situation of Indonesia, which is one of the most important criteria of literature in newspaper, namely newness. Its presence will for sure be positively beneficial for Indonesians’ horizon on the development of this nation, whether Indonesians keep sticking to their national norms and values, absorbing other norms, or hybridizing them.

In line with Indonesian development which was widely influenced by some colonial powers: the Dutch with its long colonial tradition, England with its really influential English language, and the U.S. with its global modern culture, Indonesian culture has been cornered by them, forcing it to

be ambivalent, mimicking, and anti-colonial. Undeniably, we need to say Indonesian cultural identity has changed. In rural areas where global influence is not quite conspicuous, people seem to stick with the old tradition admiring the culture which has been practiced for a long time but in cities where global development has been felt, the cultural identity has widely changed. It is now difficult to see the application of the identity among the city people. They do not know what they need to maintain anymore. What they practice is what they experience from day to day.

In relation to the issue, Eric Musa Piliang's short story "Street Smart Mom", could be a relatively necessary instance to see how Indonesian cultural identity changes; how the poor suffer in their rich home city; and how their right to live is negated. This tricky story is a picture of three in one jockeys' life in Jakarta in which a six year old boy and his mother look for money by being jockeys to help rich people in their cars pass through some certain streets of Jakarta. It pictures two groups of people; the rich and the poor who are met by the virtue of government regulation and destiny. The two classes are in need of each other: the rich need to the poor to pass through the streets of three in one routes and the poor need money to make a living from their ride to the city with the rich.

The story is structured as the interaction between two classes of people whose freedom is restricted by the government of Jakarta's laws and the power of a mother over her boy. This forced interaction has conditioned both groups to have instant contact in a car along three in one routes. The undesired encounter seems to be successful in revealing marginality among the poor of Jakarta. Marginality that means not of central importance and occupying the borderland of a relatively stable territorial or a cultural area (Merriam Webster), is often contradicted to centre (Ashcroft et al: 2002, 135) a position where everyone wants to be. Being at the margin means being at the edge, a place where everyone has to take when compelled. Being marginal is a situation persons cannot deny because what makes them marginal is not themselves but those who stay at the center. Those at the center will or can say that others are marginal. In other words being marginal is being less dominant.

Domination is one of the swords of the powerful.

It is the best tool colonizers often use to secure their power in an area. Domination is a condition where one group plays more roles over the other. The dominant group tries to improve their interests such as ideology, wills, and importance on the less dominant. The imposition can run smoothly or unexpectedly. The smooth imposition can go on where the dominated do not resist against the imposing power but such imposition can work out reversely in which the dominated disagree with what the dominant do to them. The condition can result in violence in such a way that the dominant will try everything to make their plan work by hurting their counterpart psychologically or physically. In so doing any way is considered good whether or not it is accepted.

Being dominated is a common phenomenon among the marginal people because of their inability to direct their life. They can make a living by being among the people of the center. Piliang's "the Street Smart Mom" is a particular example of the way how domination plays in the heart of the poor. It can symbolically exemplify the heart of the poor who suffer from capitalism and oppression. Jakarta, the center, has marginalized them socially and economically. Living in the center does not automatically annihilate their marginal status. In this particular story we can see that marginality does not necessarily result in certain negative effects but also positive ones. Ignorance, bribery and cheating among negative effects of the marginality they suffer.

Capitalism has created new experiences for the poor. In line with the increase of poverty as the effect of capitalism, the poor find that their life becomes more difficult. Their life becomes more marginal. They are not able to manage their own life because they cannot create good condition for their own. They have nothing to offer but to be offered. They just have their basic freedom to live where they should not live. They cannot live properly and prosperity is just a dream. Family income becomes the most serious thing for them to deal with. Insufficient income has forced them to live in the margin. Their contact with the people of the center is just to feed themselves.

Capitalism has made them suffer doubly; they economically fail to live properly in hard Jakarta and they are also ignored by the government and



the rich people. Capitalism has made them ignorant. They ignore the government whose officials are hoarse. Caring for others and feeling obedient to government have thinned and even faded due to the oppression they experienced with the officers. Capitalism influences not only marginal people as the boy and his mother but also those who are part of the center. As indicated by the story, negative effects approach both marginal people and some people of the center. Capitalist agents such as public order officers are the ones who put more oppression on the marginal. Violence and bribery are the actions they love doing: "Those public officers are rough. They keep us for days in this house; and ask for a lot of money before they release us."

Capitalism also causes the poor to survive with their own way. They find their way in order that they can fight against the capitalists. Harmonious life Indonesians used to have has gone. Cheating to live becomes common. Honesty is not valuable anymore. Money is provided to the public order officers in order that they can stay where they belong. They make money when and where they are not watched. When the officers are not there or do not plan to catch them, they will stay along the three in one routes waiting for cars to pick them up. When they get caught they have to give the money to the officers who catch them before they can go.

Furthermore, this kind of practice does not only apply to the officers but also anyone who can be victimized. The boy and his mother collaborate in telling lies to anyone who invites them to ride with passing through the three in one street of Jakarta. For them telling the truth is hard to find. When someone asks them their answer will be directed to impress the questioners hoping that they pity on them and are willing to give them more money. The officers, in reverse, try to give freedom to anybody that can be victimized. The poor become the easiest target for them to make money. In order that the poor can survive and continue their life in Jakarta without going to jail or being returned to their village, they need to bribe the officers, giving them certain amount of money so that the officers could release them. The circle seems to be natural for them. The officers understand the jockeys and the jockeys do too. However, at certain points, especially whenever the officers have to catch them in the act, they must behave as if they did their job

naturally. The jockeys, on the other hand, felt that the catch is not the end of the world here it will end their life but it is just a moment where the jockeys have to share their income with the officers who catch them.

Besides, domination also results in positive effects on the poor especially. Some positive effects on the subject need to be recorded such as making the poor stronger, smarter, and more honest. Living in the wild center has caused the poor to be stronger. The pace has trained them to be in order that they can be still alive. Capitalism will kill them whenever they are weak. The jockeys confidently stop the expected car driven in order for them to be picked up to make 3 passengers or more in one car. With good assurance they continue their life making money by being picked up on the streets. They have to dig up any potential they have so as to survive. There is no tear to drop but to run their life the best they can. The feeling of inferiority is inexistent in them even though marginality still belongs to them.

Secondly, poverty is identical to backwardness but not stupidity. The poor are made smart by the condition. They have to be smart so as to resume their hard life in the center of the nation. Capitalism will collide with them whenever they are not smart enough to deal with their errands. Capitalism has made them marginal knowing only how to feed them but not recognizing how to enjoy it. Enjoyment is something very precious for them. Women and children became the motors of the poor families as their men work in the sectors where they can only earn less money so that their wives and children cannot rely on their income. Even after they all work their income is still not enough for their family. So their uncertain daily income should be made maximal in order for them to keep alive that day. There is no bright future, no holiday, and no assurance. What they face is only how to live today and how to have strength for tomorrow.

Thirdly, hard life in the center does not always mean trickiness. Human beings are always human beings. No matter how and where they were born. They bring with them honesty, truth. Planting good values in children is not the priority anymore. A child is not in need of being taught norms because it has changed its role from the next generation to a tool for making money especially in three in one

streets of Jakarta where expensive car drivers prefer picking up a mother with a child to inviting other types of couple to get extra passengers in their cars.

Capitalism does not take the responsibility for giving negative effects but also positives ones to the poor. Capitalism, as the effect of policy in the center, had made its poor inhabitant tough. It brings up an embryo of persistence, by which everyone has to have. Everyone sticks to what they believe, no matter what as long as they can make it factual. They will do everything they could even though they have to fight with other people of the same profession, the government officers, and anybody who try to exploit them. Failure and uncertainty are their daily foods that they are forced to enjoy whether they like it or not.

## CONCLUSION

Both Iwan Setiawan's "Gender Equality" and Eric Musa Piliang's "Street Smart Mom" are two examples which can relatively give portrayal for Indonesian women who struggle for their rights in different forms. "Gender Equality" represents

Indonesian women who are searching for their freedom from traditional women to modern ones. "Street Smart Mom" represents Indonesian women (as well mothers) who are marginalized by capitalism and modernism and who are unable to get their freedom in a free country. The two stories depict women's struggle for their rights by going out of their traditional characters. "Gender Equality" shows women's changing position from the margin to the center and it enabled women to dictate their family members. The center, as previously exemplified by the colonizer, works on their strategy or policy to maintain their superiority by neglecting the tradition and norms which can undermine their power. "Street Smart Mom" provides a message that freedom is getting some money every day to live and being away from the intimidation and the blackmailing. It signals that being marginalized means being away from full freedom. What Indonesian Constitution of 1945 states that "justice for all Indonesian people" is just the dream of this country's founders not that of the marginal.

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