

WOMEN AND SEXUAL CONTRACTS IN DIVAKARUNI'S *ARRANGED MARRIAGE*

Perempuan dan Kontrak Seksual dalam Buku *Arranged Marriage* Karya Divakaruni

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Abstract: *This study examines the position of women in Divakaruni's collection of short stories. This study aims to look at the role of women in Divakaruni's collection of short stories entitled Arranged Marriage, and uses the narrative of the sexual contracts to examine the posed issue. The sexual contracts theory was chosen because it can investigate the complications revealed. Therefore this theory is well-suited to determining the position of women in Divakaruni's collection of Arranged Marriage stories. The data is presented in the form of character utterances and author narration. This study used a qualitative descriptive method to analyze the data. Women are depicted as property where the property owner is free to do whatever he wants. The property owner speaks harshly when he is upset. Women must obey whatever men say if they do not want to be physically abused.*

Key Words: *Arranged Marriage, Patriarchy, Women, Sexual contracts*

Abstrak: *Studi ini menganalisis penggambaran posisi perempuan dalam kumpulan cerpen Divakaruni yang berjudul Arranged Marriage. Studi ini melihat apa posisi wanita yang digambarkan berdasarkan koleksi cerita pendek Arranged Marriage yang dianalisis melalui teori narasi kontrak seksual dari Carole Pateman. Teori ini dipilih karena dapat mengeksplorasi komplikasi yang terungkap. Maka dari itu teori sangat cocok digunakan untuk mengetahui posisi wanita dalam kumpulan cerita Arranged Marriage oleh Divakaruni. Datanya berupa tuturan tokoh dan narasi pengarang. Untuk menguji data, penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Penelitian menunjukkan bahwa wanita diposisikan sebagai properti yang berkepemilikan. Dimana pemilik properti tersebut dapat berbuat semaunya. pemilik properti dapat marah bila dia tersinggung, berkata kasar jika dia sedang kesal. Perempuan juga diharuskan untuk patuh pada apapun yang dikatakan oleh laki-laki jika tidak ingin mendapatkan kekerasan fisik.*

Kata-kata Kunci: *Perjodohan, Patriarki, Perempuan, Kontrak Seksual*

INTRODUCTION

Women's issue is an interesting and complex thing to be analyzed in culture. Many things can be studied upon women's concerns that take place, especially about gender equality. Feminism and women's issues are intertwined. According to Tong (2009, p. 128-129), feminism is the way women act for something that has been ingrained in their souls, along with how they perceive themselves as women. Feminism is designated to be a liberating force for the rigidity of social structure that is formulated on the basis of gender

variables. Feminism is stimulated mostly by woman figures, but it is aimed for a universal scope. It can be interpreted as an attempt by women to create a political movement or ideology that supports equal rights for men and women. Gender equality is demanded because women and men supposedly have equal rights in society, including social, economic, political, and other opportunities. This movement also provides equal benefits to men and women, ensuring that not one party of each side to suffer.

Feminism emerged in the 16th and 18th centuries. During this era, there was a significant wave of protests from women around Europe due to the church's policies that were claimed to bring bad effects on women and put women in a low position. Whereas in the early 1970s, feminist movements started to take off in India (Gangoli, 2007, p. 18). In its theoretical as well as philosophical foundation, feminism transdisciplinarily constructs its relevance through the help of other disciplines (Sandford, 2015). Feminism is, then, divided into several types of thinking, in which it is highly influenced by the ordinary philosophical ideas it borrows. These several types include liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, socialist feminism, radical feminism and psychoanalytic feminism to name a few. One of the causes of the emergence of this feminist movement is the existence of a patriarchal system that introduces the power of men over women. Thus, academically and philosophically, the idea of feminism is always contradicted in a dualism with patriarchy.

Anne Cranny (2003, p. 15) states that patriarchal culture refers to a social system that contains structural distinctions in terms of power and authority inherent in masculinity and culture, as well as in the economic and social domains. This system leads to the creation of a new life for men to have the power of procreation that makes men as the main agents in the generation. This patriarchal concept will also directly lead to the contract. This is because patriarchy has been transformed into a civil contractual relationship of capitalism. Patriarchy in the sexual contracts must be fought by making public policy in treating women in the equal position of men. Women have equal rights with men and freedom from men's domination. Political rights that are regarded as patriarchal rights or specific gender rights pertaining to how men utilize their power to dominate women are derived from the theory of the sexual contract (Pateman, 1988, p. 1).

As one of the consequences, among many, of deeply entrenched patriarchal structure in society is the common practice of 'arranged marriage'. As many liberalist thoughts often advocate the freedom to choose in many aspects, including one instance of freedom in choosing how to build a relationship and with whom that relationship may be built (Brake, 2010), the concept of arranged marriage on the other hand contradicts that notion. Arranged marriage is a concept of the constitution of relationship in particular culture that is based on social, economic, political, and historico-cultural aspects of two individuals engaged in a relationship, precisely in a marriage. It means that the marriage in that culture is practiced in accordance to the norm and factors mentioned above, signifying the fixedness or degree of properness that should be checked before the marriage takes place. This practice often times

occurs in a more traditional and conservative society. Internationally, it is often linked with India as a country whose caste system is known to be limiting (Pande, 2015). Arranged marriage is closely linked with a patriarchal structure since it fixedly designates men as the 'controller' of the marriage, or as the very image of the 'goodness' in that marriage. Whilst, on the other hand, women are seen to be passive and submissive towards the relationship they are in for (White, 2017).

Building from the comprehension above, this study analyzes the concept of arranged marriage in Divakaruni's collection of short stories entitled *Arranged Marriage* in the correlation of the societal structure in India. This study further focuses on how the story depicts women's position, rather than the latitude of power that men hold in the stories. The discussion towards women include what women do in their daily lives, the jobs and activities they perform, and how men's and women's roles in the home are divided. Furthermore, this study investigates the influence of the sexual contract on women. Apart from the function that women play in their lives, sexual contracts have an impact on women's lives in this section.

Arranged Marriage is a collection of short stories with the theme of arranged marriage that occurs in Indian society and the experience of immigration from India to America written by Divakaruni Chitra Banerjee. This book was published in 1995. There are 11 short stories in this book. This book tells stories of an Indian woman who had an arranged marriage. Although in some stories, it is not the main character who experiences it, the whole story has something to do with arranged marriage.

Analyzing the role of women and women's position associated with traditions that still exist in Indian society, this study applies the theory of sexual contract from Carole Pateman. Most of the previous studies towards *Arranged Marriage* discussed about the diaspora and also the tradition or just analyze the issues that occur in the story using feminist studies which are very common to use. First is the article entitled *Cultural Conflict In Chitra Divakaruni's Arranged Marriage* (2017) by Naeemul Haq from Annamalai University, Chennai, India. Naeemul's article analyzes how the female protagonists in the stories are encouraged to develop positive attitudes in their lives and how they cope with cultural changes in unfamiliar places. Second is the article from G. Rajeswari entitled *A Comparative Study of Indian and Immigrant Indian Women in the Select Stories from Arranged Marriage by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni* (2018). In the book *Arranged Marriage*, Rajeswari explores the disparities in female characters in short stories. A comparative study is used to compare female characters. Using marriage as a theme, Rajeswari discovers that marriage is a prevalent societal institution that produces chaos and sorrow in the lives of all female characters in some way. The third is the article from S. Shanmugam and Dr. G. Keerthi entitled *Manifestation Of Gendered Violence In Divakaruni's Arranged Marriage* (2018). The objective of this study is to uncover the atmosphere of gender violence in the book *Arranged Marriage*. Gender violence is the key topic, which is discussed utilizing feminism theory. Shanmugam and Dr. Keerthi also look into the subject of patriarchy, which is mentioned in the

story and is linked to gender violence. They discovered that patriarchal violence towards women harms the psychological development of individuals who surround these women.

Whilst the majority of previous studies focused on diaspora and immigration issues, this study takes a different lens by incorporating the theory of sexual contracts by Carole Pateman.

METHOD

This study used a descriptive-qualitative method. According to Hossein Nassaji (2015, p. 129), descriptive research seeks to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics. This study analyzes the women's position as an issue that appears in the book *Arranged Marriage* by Divakaruni C. Banerjee. Descriptive methods are used to explain the specifics of the research data. This method was chosen because it is capable of analyzing a phenomenon about women's position. This study analyzes the book *Arranged Marriage* by Divakaruni Chitra Banerjee, which contains 11 short stories.

The writer's first step in collecting data is to read Divakaruni's *Arranged Marriage*. The used reading technique was the reading-between-the-line technique. This technique was used to understand the hidden meaning in the book and obtain information related to the existing data. The selected data were presented in the discussion section alongside with the writer's interpretation as helped by Pateman's sexual contracts theory.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of India's Arranged Marriage

India is one example out of many countries that has kept patriarchal culture alive. Patriarchy is still inherent in Indian social life. Hindu women's limited property rights were opposed in the Constituent Assembly in 1955, with some claiming that it would destroy Hindu society and cause conflict between brothers and sisters (Gangoli, 2007, p. 35). The existence of social class classification based on caste and norms prevailing in society produces a gap, resulting in discrimination against Indian women or to put it rather precisely, a limitation for Indian women to create a life trajectory based on their own conscious decision-making processes. An example of this statement is the fact of the marriage system in India. Indian traditional society is known to hold an endogamous idea in which the process of marriage should be done by two individuals who are included in the same social group (Lochtefeld, 2002, p. 381). Not only in marriage, but this closed-system also occurs in social, educational, and economic life. The position of women in the social structure is still being challenged. In terms of the marriage system, it is known to be called as "arranged marriage". The rigid social and gender classification in India results in the growing, yet still premature, feminist movements there. In India, specifically, the feminist movement entails a postcolonial paradigm as a dominant *episteme* in various forces of social resistance in India (Chaudhuri, 2004).

Arranged marriage is one of the popular traditions in India especially in Hindu society. This signifies that arranged marriage is a part of Indian society's life and still remain the majorly preferred way for the people to enter into marriage. James G. Lochtefeld states that marriage arrangements based on the rigidity of social and class background are still extremely popular among modern Hindu communities, and many young people do not even consider arranging their own marriages freely (2002, p. 54). This statement indicates that arranged marriage is a part of Indian society's life and still remains the majorly preferred way for Indian people to enter into marriage.

Furthermore, the traditional way of thinking that still limits interactions based on gender is also one of the factors that causes arranged marriage to still exist. James G. Lochtefeld (2002, p. 54) states that Indian society is still heavily separated based on gender. In villages and small towns, social engagement between unmarried men and women who are not related to the family is still uncommon. As a result of gender segregation, young people frequently struggle to build relationships with individuals of the opposite gender.

In the practice of arranged marriage, generally, parents will arrange for their son or daughter to meet with many candidates. Mostly, Indian women will accept the candidate chosen by their parents to honor them because they believe that arranged marriage is a blessing. The majority of young men and women in India adhere to social standards and accept the social disciplines of traditional life. The conflict between "Indian arranged marriage and family values" and "western style love marriages" has hampered efforts to understand the nature of human desire and the selection of marriage partners (Bhakat, 2015, p. 179). Because marriage is a joint matter, the family will be fully involved in choosing a partner based on their social status and honor in the eyes of society.

Women's position in *Arranged Marriage*

There are many examples of arranged marriages in Divakaruni's short stories. All of the marriages in the story are the result of an arranged marriage set up by their parents. However, the depiction of the story illustrates how strong these women are in dealing with all male characteristics. Not only that they are depicted as capable in surviving patriarchal structure, but they are also depicted to be strong characters. In this case, patriarchy contributes to the emergence of men's authoritarian tendencies toward women characters' as well as the strong characterization of them.

Clothes

Arranged marriage becomes a sexual contract since it binds the notion of sexuality into the relationship. According to Pateman (1988, p. 45), marriage is a long-term contract as well as a long-term sexual partnership, namely a long-term partnership with a long-term agreement. Legally, in marriage, it will definitely involve a contract where the contract acts as a legal tool to guarantee the sustainability of the marital status. Pateman (1988, p. 5) further characterizes the contractual nature of marriage as a general concept of social

connections and an essential tool for establishing social interactions, such as the bond that exists between men and women in marriage. It also states that there will be parties involved in the contract. The man is commonly designated as the property's owner in a sexual contract, whilst the woman on the other hand is depicted as a property (Pateman, 1988, p. 177). This signification is prominent to occur in a more traditional and conservative society. As depicted in the short story *Clothes*.

"Besides, wasn't it every woman's destiny, as Mother was always telling me, to leave the known for the unknown? She had done it, and her mother before her. A married woman belongs to her husband, her in-laws." (Divakaruni, 1995, p. 16)

This story, tells about a girl named Sumita who is waiting for a proposal from a man. Until one day, Somesh, an Indian man from California, approaches her and asks for her hand in marriage. Sumita's parents revealed that a married woman belongs to her husband and family rather than her parents. This proves that there is ownership of women's positions.

Subordination highlights that patriarchy is based on contracts that do not need women to accept their status. Because of a situation that is naturally subversive to the existence of men's political order, women are required to submit to men as subordinated parties (Pateman, 1988, p. 96). This is illustrated in other short stories of Divakaruni.

Silver Pavements, Golden Roofs

"Can we get going? I got to be back at work. You women can chat all day once you get home."

His voice isn't unkind. Still I feel reprimanded, as though I am a little girl again" (Divakaruni, 1995, p. 28)

The short story *Silver Pavements, Golden Roofs* tells the story of Jayanti, an Indian woman who had the opportunity to study in America but chose to stay at her aunt Pratima's house and with her husband Bikram. Aunt Pratima and her husband got married because of an arranged marriage and then Aunt Pratima followed her husband to live in America. The above statement, uttered in an unfriendly tone by Bikram's uncle, and corroborated by Jayanti's reaction, demonstrate the authority of men who want women to submit to men and obey all orders. Jayanti's reaction, as a woman, shows shock and a sense that she had made a mistake and thus received a reprimand. There is a sense of generalization towards women in the line above, in which women are seen to only capable of chatting unlike the men who have the obligation to go to work. It is strengthened by the temporal marker of "all day" which shows that the women here are entrapped in a domestic obligation only.

The Maid Servant's Story

"The sister was right, of course. There was a scene at dinner when the husband found out that his wife had hired a woman to be her personal maid without consulting him." (Divakaruni, 1995, p. 81)

The Maid Servant's Story is a short story with a long plot. Starting with the story of the yellow saffron sari, it has a tragic backstory. However, Manisha, a modern girl, thinks it's all ridiculous. So, Manisha's Aunt, Deppa Mashi shared a story about turmeric yellow juice. The above scene is an excerpt from Mashi's story about a woman who applied for a job as a maid. The wife, who had opened the door for the woman at the time, graciously accepted the woman's offer to work for her. Her husband, however, was adamantly opposed. Her husband believed that before making a decision, his wife should consult with him. The husband's character is irritated in the above narrative because she does not involve him in decision-making.

The relationship between men and women in a sexual contract is distinguished by a sexual difference. Sexual difference is a societal patriarchal role that demands women to be subordinated and dependent on men (Pateman, 1988, p. 97). This distinction stems from their important roles as a result of their positions; men work while women care for children and households.

The Bats

"Father always slept late in the mornings. Because he worked so hard at the Rashbihari Printing Press where he was a foreman, earning food and rent money for us, Mother had explained." (Divakaruni, 1988, p. 5)

The establishment of a sexual contract is triggered by this discrepancy in roles and responsibilities. On the other hand, Pateman believes that this patriarchal sexual relationship will only demonstrate an unjust relationship. Because of these distinctions, different roles and responsibilities emerge. One of the various roles that describe women's positions is that they have sexual relations with men, marry, and then become mothers in the family (Pateman, 1988, p. 17).

"But he has already started on the food. He eats quickly and with concentration, without raising his head. When he wants more he points silently, and Aunt hurries to serve him." (Divakaruni, 1995, p. 30)

The quote illustrates how women's roles in relation to men are that husband and wife carry out their roles while serving the needs of their husbands. A woman's position, which requires her to be submissive, makes a man feel like the boss. So what is shown is how a wife must serve and fulfill her husband's wishes. The husband and wife relationship is a legally protected relationship. This, however, does not make men reluctant to continue as the contract's owner.

One of the reasons for people to marry is to have children. In this case, women's status will also change. From being a wife to becoming a mother. The addition of this title to the task also automatically adds to it. A mother must care for and guide her child in addition to being submissive and always serving her husband. Cleaning, shopping, cooking, washing, and ironing are now tasks

performed by an A (house) wife, which were previously performed by a waitress (Pateman, 1988, p. 128).

The results of this study corroborate the contractual sexual theory by showing that women are in a subordinate position in marriage. Men tend to dominate family life because they are stronger than women, which serves as evidence for this. They also provide protection for women in exchange for submission. Women's roles are therefore entrusted with serving their spouses, taking care of their children, and being financially dependent on men because they are the only ones with access to private space. Women are forced to accept their masters' decisions and are not allowed to pick their spouses. Therefore, it appears that women's identities are tied to obedience.

This study builds on previous studies that used the same data source. Based on the principle of the sexual contract, this study explains women's position and describes their situation in marriage. Divakaruni's *Arranged Marriage* does not only represent the tumultuous life of immigrants and diasporas, but within those large thematic issues lies a gender issue as viewed through the lens of sexual contract.

CONCLUSION

In the narration of sexual contracts, women play the role of the subordinate side, where they must always submit to the control of men. Women are also positioned merely as a property owned by men because women have less freedom compared to men. Women are seen as inferior due to their status as subordinates, whilst men are the superior ones. As the first and foremost image of a family, men are seen as "The Master". They have the authority to decide matters and to rule his family. In addition, the agreement stipulates that in exchange for men protecting women, women must submit to them. Women take the role as a wife and mother. Women can only accomplish everything well because they are the dominated party. Taking care of her children, cleaning the house, and serving her husband. The sexual contracts theory makes woman become someone who cannot be independent and has'nt the power to avoid discrimination. The status and contracts that bind them, make women's rights legally dependent on men.

In the analysis above towards Divakaruni's *Arranged Marriage*, it is shown how the concept of arranged marriage in India becomes a prominent "product" of patriarchal social structure. It is proven by how the male characters are often viewed to possess more power compared to female characters within the marriage. Both male and female characters are shown not to have control in choosing the relationship they want, but the power differential takes place in the aftermath of the marriage.

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