

**THE PROTOTYPE OF A REBELLIOUS WIDOW IN JAVANESE MYTHOLOGY AS REPRESENTED  
IN PRAMOEDYA ANANTA TOER'S *CALON ARANG*: SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

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**Abstract**

Since a long time ago., the woman who had been left by her husband is always regarded as a bad person, even in reality they are nice. Whether a divorcee or a widow, the depiction from society about them always related to bad things, such as bringing malady to the other married life. In the older days, they always seek as a hideous figure who can harm other people's life. Although she does not want the divorce, sometimes she does not have a choice rather than divorce. This paper is aiming to find shreds of evidence that Calon Arang was not a pure villain, but she was marginalized too by her people. Through the theory of Subaltern, a title about a secluded group of people that was found by Chakravorty Spivak an Indian post-colonist. The result of this research shows that Calon Arang was also a victim of society's stigma about a widow or the divorcee as someone frightening which led her to the rebellion. In the end of the story, her voice was still not sounded and she was defeated yet helped by a man due to society mentality that thought a woman have no voice or right to speak their mind nor fight for herself. Which also represented the other widows or women condition during the era, their voices were shuts and treated as the lower class who is unable to live without the help of a man.

**Keywords:** stigmatism, subaltern, widow

**Abstrak**

Sejak jaman dulu kala, wanita yang telah ditinggal suaminya selalu dipandang sebagai sosok yang buruk, walau pada kenyataannya mereka tidak. Entah mereka yang diceraikan hukum atau cerai mati, gambaran masyarakat tentang mereka selalu dihubungkan dengan imaji imaji buruk, seperti membawa petaka bagi pernikahan orang lain. Di masa lampau, mereka dipandang sebagai sosok mengerikan yang bisa membahayakan hidup sesamanya. Padahal dia tidak punya pilihan lain, karena terkadang dia tidak mempunyai pilihan lain selain perceraian. Artikel ini mencoba untuk menemukan bukti bukti terkait jika Calon Arang, bukanlah penjahat yang paling jahat, tapi dia juga terpinggirkan oleh masyarakat di sekitarnya. Melalui teori Subaltern, sebuah julukan untuk orang orang tertindas yang ditemukan Chakravorty Spivak seorang pembuat teori pasca-kolonial. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan jika Calon Arang juga seorang korban dari stigma masyarakat tentang janda sebagai sosok mengerikan yang nantinya akan menjerus kepada perlawanannya. Di akhir cerita, suaranya tetap tak terdengar dan dia dikalahkan juga ditolong seorang pria. Ini menunjukkan jika wanita maupun janda di masa itu, dibungkam dan diperlakukan sebagai makhluk rendahan yang tak bisa hidup tanpa bantuan dari seorang pria.

**Kata kunci:** stigmatisme, subaltern, janda

## INTRODUCTION

Since a long time ago. The woman who had been left by their husbands are always regarded as bad people, even in reality they are nice. Whether a divorcee or widows, the depiction of society about them always related to bad things, such as bringing malady the other people's married life. In the older days, they always seek a hideous figure who can harm everyone around her and she lives a pressured life full of society's demands as an impact of how tough the patriarchal culture was before.

The word Patriarchy was rooted in a Greek word that means head of the family that leads their members. However, before the feminist era, the usage of patriarchy was used to depict the relationship between a father and his responsibility but as the period passes. The meaning of patriarchy changes too into the domination of men towards women depending on both gender differences such as physical appearances and their roles (Artanti and Wedati,2020).

Especially in the land of Java. Their culture has been known for its great reputation for maintaining its patriarchal culture that mostly brings disadvantages for both genders, especially women. Gender inequality has become a normal issue, the discrimination and unfairness were tough during the Hindu civilization era because the spiritual belief taught the people that women only bring men to their destruction.

That led society to treat women as a group of people from the second-class seat. Their rights were cut and their voice was silenced, they only taught someone obedient and delicate which made gender discrimination tougher in the past. As an example, Aisyah from *Para Priyayi* was a girl who's right to gain higher education was stolen from her and she was only allowed to marry a man who was far older than her (Mawwadah: 2021)

This is why, in most Javanese classic literature. Good women are always portrayed as weak and evil women are portrayed as someone who has more power, those who were brave enough to their voice but silenced by the male dominion. There are so many stories, where men are described as a hero who help and save much life then they have a beautiful yet delicate wives by their side. This can be a nice example of how bad was the patriarchal culture in Javanese culture.

However, in their development. Javanese culture has been influenced by many civilizations included the Hindu period, which brought some influences from India to Java. As an example, the architecture of temples that are still witnessed nowadays and their religious beliefs. Aside from the positive impact, there will be a negative impact from the overseas civilization that was brought and stuck to the land of Java till nowadays. It was called a patriarchal culture that slowly oppressed women and stole their right to speak because a woman should keep her voice down and only works as a man's complement rather than as a companion by obeying their husband's decision entirely with no excuses.

In modern days, the term subaltern is used for a group of people whose voice has been stolen or even limited by society. They lack the right to have access to public areas such as their rights and obligations, they are secluded from society (Thomas, 2018). An example, colonized people, minority, or people who are considered as weaker by society. Chakravorty Spivak, an Indian post-colonist and a feminist use these terms to analyze her country. Included how worse, patriarchy in India back then which inspired Javanese culture back then.

Since the *Calon Arang* setting was on Java during the Hindu civilization, it makes the patriarchal culture grows because most of Javanese cultural values are from India. Either it's from the book, laws, culture, or rules that were made based on Hindi's influences. In Spivak's book, she wrote that they led to women's marginalization or oppression, due to forced femininity(Artanti and Wedati: 2020)

Since gender meant some roles differ for both males and females. Include their function, roles, status, and responsibility that have been constructed by society not something that a person brought inborn (Rahmadian: 2017). In other words, gender is the product of a culture that society holds on to and establishes as their standards in life, if one could not fulfill it they will be judged as someone who did some disgraceful matter which made them deserved to be punished. "Femininity is not inborn but it is created by society to make women in a lower position than men" Artanti and Wedati-2020

The novel was rewritten by Pramoedya Ananta Toer (1925-2006), a post-colonialism novelist who used to live in the colonialization era and independent era. His life, both as a child and an Indonesian had influenced his works as a writer to both

criticize the government and fight against the colonizers. Since he was born from a patriotic family who goes against the colonists, while grew up as someone who had witnessed the worst side of colonialization and how the government could be harsh towards their people.

He has won many prizes and awards, such as Ramon Magsaysay on 1992 and Le Chevalier de l'ordre des Arts et des Letters at French in 2000. Although, his works used to be banned and led him to his imprisonment during his younger days because he was thought of as a rebel who went against the government rules at that time. However, his works were read secretly by college students or everyone who longs for freedom and the right to fight against the villain.

He rewrote the story of a woman who lives alone with her daughter and apprentices that later on cause malady to people around her. She was an old dark widow witch who experts in cursing, her name was Calon Arang and she only live with a daughter whose age had been rich enough to marry the man of her dream. However, there are a lot of people who talk bad about her daughter and no men want to marry Ratna which grew the rage in her heart that led her to her first genocide.

Due to concern about his kingdom, the king sent a wise priest named Mpu Bharada and his son to defeat Calon Arang. Later on, it is mentioned that Mpu Bharada has a daughter that suffers from oppression by her stepmother. In the end, they successfully defeat the evil witch and gave her the redemption she needs but did they really save her from her sins or they just give another oppression to her? This paper will analyze Calon Arang's life as a witch, mother, and widow during the period of Hindu civilization through the theory of subaltern by Spivak and textual research.

## **METHOD**

The data sources in this study are mainly in the novel by Pramoedya Ananta Toer and original Javanese Folklore Calon Arang. The analyses were added with some explanations from some experts. Then the data collection was cross-checked by using Calon Arang story either with some characters who had an influence on Calon Arang's life and decisions in her life. Those characters were used to strengthen the arguments to validate the existence of Calon Arang character as the center of the discussion.

The data collection was started by close reading through the whole story that relates to the topic of the study. Close reading is needed to collect the shreds of evidence from the novel to support the hypothesis above without missing any little detail. Comparing the data with the other literary work that held similar subalternity themes, and then analyzing the data using theories and approaches that are suitable for the topic.

Lastly, elaborating the data with the other sources that support the hypothesis to gain a solid conclusion for the study. To support data for the hypothesis, the first thing to do was to elaborate on the themes/topics in the novel. Then the discussion was done by elaborating the discussion both from the books, journals, and previous studies on the novel.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

When discussing Calon Arang, the theories which cannot be separated from the context of this myth are subaltern and patriarchal theories. Therefore, this part will be divided into two sections namely subaltern theory and patriarchal theory.

### **Subaltern Theory**

The aim of Subaltern is 'lowly people, a name that was adopted from Antonio Gramsci to point to the people who are subject to the highest power in society (Ashcroft, Bill Griffiths, Gareth and Tiffin, 2000:198). While Spivak concludes that a subaltern is a woman who tried to be assertive in front of other people. She 'spoke' something but women did not, even do not 'hear' her. So, it can be interpreted as a subaltern, a subject in society with no power of social movement (Spivak, 2006:28).

Then it can be classified into two groups: 'dominant foreign groups' and 'dominant indigenous groups at the all-India and the regional and local levels'. It is the depiction between 'lower classes' and elite people, or on a deeper meaning is 'people' and 'subaltern classes' (Spivak, 2006:32). Moreover, Guha mentioned that people from politics are classified as indigenous people. They have authority in politics. In other words, those people are usually the colonials who create the wrong rules for the people outside of their circle.

Guha constructs the structure of their position into some places or arrangements. Derrida describes it as an 'antre'. It is the arrangement between the people

and the macrostructural dominant groups or as a place of in-betweenness. There are the arrangements of elite people according to Derrida's description from Guha's statement.

1. Dominant foreign groups.
2. Dominant indigenous groups on the all-India level.
3. Dominant indigenous groups at the regional and local levels.
4. The terms 'people' and 'subaltern classes' (are) used as the terms based on

Guha's definition above is valid and it resembles what has been defined by Derrida. The social groups and elements included in this category represent the demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those whom that called the 'elite'. The historiography from Gramsci has been written down in 'Notes on Italian history'.

He has included these outlines for studying the history of the subaltern classes such as (1) their objective formation; (2) their active or passive affiliation to the dominant political formations; (3) the birth of new parties and dominant groups; (4) the formations that the subaltern groups produce to press their claims; (5) new formations within the old framework that assert the autonomy of the subaltern classes; and other points referring to trade unions and political parties (Gramsci 1971:52) (Ashcroft, Bill Griffiths, Gareth and Tiffin, 2000:198-199).

Gramsci argued the history of subaltern classes is organized in society. Even if they are rebels, they cannot detach from the subject of the ruling classes. In a deeper meaning, they have less power to control their position and less access to the higher social classes. But only 'permanent' authority can walk on other levels although they do not prevail.

Spivak categorized the subaltern by looking at the situation of gendered subjects and Indian Women in particular. Both of them are the subject of colonialist historiography and as a subject of insurgency which men as the dominant of the ideological construction. Spivak examines the position of Indian Women through some analyses that sum up and conclude with the declaration that 'the subaltern cannot speak.

The only way they can speak is just too dominant in language, so they can be heard. Unfortunately, that way is difficult to reach that position without the oppression (Ashcroft, Bill Griffiths, Gareth and Tiffin, 2000:201). The target of Spivak is the problematically subaltern identity not only the subaltern subject's ability to give voice to political concerns. The main point is no act of resistance occurs on behalf of an essential subaltern entirely separate from the dominant discourse that provides the language and the conceptual categories with which the subaltern voice speaks.

#### Patriarchy

The term 'patriarchy' was born from the Greek *πατριάρχης* (head of a family who leads the members of it) contains the meaning of authority, family relationships, and strata in the society (Pierik, 2009:8). Before feminist usage, patriarchy as a concept was mostly used to describe the authority of a father over the household and its members. The history of patriarchy needs 2500 years to complete it is in terms of patriarchy.

The definition of patriarchy is the domination of men over women (Lerner, 1986:212). In other words, patriarchy is the concept to overthrow the biological differentiation between men and women, it means women are different because of biological appearance, bodies, or even different roles. In this case the notion those men always dominating women in many ways. The patriarchal system is marked by power, dominance, competition, and hierarchy. Patriarchal is not only about women's labor but other aspects including sexuality that affects psychological care (Walby, 1990:173). Patriarchy control women from any aspect, especially in sexuality and reproductive capacity.

Allan Johnson, a sociologist working in masculinities, calls our male-centered, male-identified, male-dominated social structure "patriarchy" and identifies male distrust and fear of other men as patriarchy's core motivating force. Patriarchal culture values "control and domination" most, because the control and domination of other men ensure one's safety from them. In Allan Johnson's words what drives Patriarchy as a system - what fuels competition, aggression, and oppression - is a dynamic relationship between control and fear.

Patriarchy encourages men to seek security, status, and other rewards through control; to fear other

men's ability to control and harm them, and to identify being in control as both their best defense against loss and humiliation and the surest route they need and desire. In this sense, although we usually think of patriarchy in terms of women and men, it is more about what goes on among men. The oppression of women is certainly an important part of patriarchy, but, paradoxically, it may not be the point of patriarchy (Becker, Beckert, & Neely, 1999:24).

Although oppression is not the main cause of patriarchy, the social system of masculinity and femininity caused women to be treated to fulfill men's needs. This system leads women to a lower position in the social structure. Many forms of group-based inequality are tangled together in a patriarchal culture. A woman can be a trophy, symbolizing and signaling a man's success against and to other men. Most men are not in the top position of hierarchal or patriarchal, and because of that women are like the presents for them.

This reality gives them little someone over whom they have rights of power and control as they want to. In patriarchy, women are expected to stay with men when they have been damaged by other men. Besides that, when men are failed, women must be there to accept all of the blame and receive men's disappointment and pain.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the analysis are put in the section of results and discussion in the article. The detail of the result of the discussion is in the following sub-sections.

### Evil Witch and Apprentices

During the Hindu civilization in Indonesia, people's activities were divided based on their castes. There were four main castes called Brahma the spiritualist, Ksatria the royalty and their knights, Waisya the merchants and businessmen, and last but not least Sudra, or the commoner themselves. Who have to obey the higher castes. The spiritual rites mostly limited only Brahma to done it, as they were the caste who were consist of spiritual figures like a priest or priestess and hermits. Although the other caste has the same level of intelligence. For example, they were able to cast a spell, call a deity like a god or a goddess, become an exorcist who could kick a malady and heal people who were sick but unable to heal by a physician, or even bless the whole country.

*"As a priestess, she bowed to Durga, the goddess of destruction, at whose temple she had numerous followers" (Toer, 2002 p: 15).*

It was mentioned that Calon Arang was both a shaman and a priestess. However, she was no ordinary dark priestess because she successfully summons Durga, the goddess of destruction which at those times could not be done by commoners or people who have no spiritual background in Hinduism. At least the person should be experienced in doing the rites. She also has many apprentices, which shows that she might come from a higher social status than most people around her, and having higher status meant that she has more power to do almost everything by her own will or so-called privilege. She starts to abuse everyone around her with the power she gains from the goddess under the excuse to protect her daughter.

*"Her heart was so foul she wanted to kill more than one person, but as many as possible. She wanted to kill until her heart found satisfaction"(Toer, 2002 p: 17)*

She misused all the power she has even she abused her apprentice who part ways with her but hold the evil apprentices dearly. Besides the pressure she receives, she is also the one who oppresses her kin. She turns from someone who has colonized to the colonizer herself by murdering her people and making them scared of her rather than respect her as an elder lady, which is usually done to show her dominance and to show those people how strong she was compared to those people who she considered as a weakling. A worthless creature that was allowed to be killed and forgotten by its surroundings, only to fulfill her desire and shows her power as someone more powerful than everyone.

### Calon Arang as Woman and a Widow

Women's position during Hindu civilization was particularly sought as more inferior than men. Especially during that era, their voices were limited unless they became the people's choice. In the classic era, the leader or a ruler was chosen by people themselves regardless of their gender. If the people chose them, they can lead and rule but negative gazes still follow the female ruler. Such as female teachers.

*Calon Arang was a woman of some years in age with a daughter by the name of Ratna Manggali. (Toer, 2002 p: 15)*

Calon Arang herself was not only an ordinary shaman but also a woman and a widow. Due to their cultural beliefs and laws, women should not be better than men, in almost every aspect. At those time there were a lot of shamans and many black magicians other than her that is dominated by men, which made women who become a witch mocked by the people surrounding them. Especially, those who came from the marginalized group.

Widows and women both married or unmarried are considered to the margins by the people of Java due to their religion (Hindu) and their laws. Those women were placed into the lower class in society's position, due to the impact of tough patriarchal culture and laws that had been grown in every aspect of their life. Which made people easily judge them for their status, while for men the laws are kind of flexible where they don't have to worry about status or occupation.

They only left the women to suffer so much mockery due to their marital status as standards for a good social life. This is not only limited to widows but also to other unmarried ladies like Ratna Manggali who had not married for years till her ripe age was suffered from society's stereotypes towards her, they thought of her as someone who is as evil as her mother was. Although never mentioned in the novel Ratna Manggali was a criminal like her mother.

Whenever Ratna Manggali was out and about, the villagers would bow their heads as she passed. When she greeted people, they would shake or, at most, nod their heads. So afraid were people of saying something wrong to her, they kept their mouths sealed; no one wanted to anger her mother, Calon Arang and bring down misfortune on their heads.

As there was an old saying said that folklore could interpret what happen during one period. This can be imagery and depiction of how people during the classical monarchy eras treated an unmarried woman and a widow. They will judge them based on their social status, if the widow has an unmarried daughter people will also judge the daughter as someone who could ruin someone's life, especially the other marriage's life that the girl who knew about nothing was attached to because of her mother.

It can be clear that people at that time thought of widows and some groups of marginalized women as terrible. They don't deserve to be treated in the same way as society treats other people equally, while the

widower still thought of them as someone who is nice and kind or someone who won't bring any cruelty to their life. Such as stealing their marriage partner, or breaking down everything they had been built, and sometimes they treat those men with high praises or made them a god-like person.

Whenever the Priest went, people rushed out to seek his blessing. With his presence, the dead became alive and the ill regained their health. Because with each step of his journey he bestowed favor on those he passed, he was showered constantly with petals and flowers. Whenever he took his leave from a community to continue his journey, the people would gather and bow down before him. (Toer, 2002 p; 106)

*As time went by Empu Baradah was finally forced to conclude that the life of his dearly beloved was drawing to an end. (Toer, 2002 p: 26)*

These passages show that Empu Baradah was a widower priest but no one was not dared to talk about his marital status. However, people only talk about his kindness and the original writer also depicts that since the very old times men will always receive more respect from the people than women who belong to similar status. People treat him as a God-like human being who can bless and bring miracles or goodness to his surrounding, or describes him as a virtuous person despite his motives for doing anything.

Compared to how society treats Calon Arang. They treat her as a criminal who deserved to be secluded from her society, even her daughter who knew nothing as another impact of how strong patriarchy is in Javanese culture. Women are demanded to lower their power and voice; they were not allowed to appear as a figure that have more power. The writer also sounds like he wrote about this kind of widower as someone who will help the whole kingdom, to avoid the male gazes or nonsense critics about his work.

*Calon Arang now hooted with laughter. "You silly coward!" Larung also slammed his fellow pupil: "We're not cowards, Lendi. What do you have to be afraid of? What's there to worry about?" He then barked in laughter too. "What's the use of lifting up the hem of your sarong when it's already wet? Better jump in, sarong and all, and take a bath!" (Toer, 2002 p: 55)*

Besides her evil deeds and Empu Baradah's good deeds. Calon Arang possibly took people who were willing to avenge their revenge as her apprentices regardless of their background, possibly she and her apprentices live under the same building because they are always seen together in the novel. This showing that Calon Arang was not a purely evil lady, she still has some good side inside her heart that has been tainted by her madness.

However, her madness was the only way to fight the patriarchal culture around her. Where a woman and her unmarried daughter are bad, but still, she acts like the almost elder people during that era who thoughts that marriage is the only way to protect her daughter. Rather than let her daughter be a single, tough and kind young lady who doesn't follow her path, or maybe she wants a man to marry her daughter because she doesn't want to hurt her later. In other words, she just wants someone to protect her daughter as she was a lady of a certain age.

*For Calon Arang the day of her daughter's wedding was the happiest day of her life. She couldn't imagine another person feeling more happy. She laughed frequently and smiled broadly, so pleased was she that her daughter future was settled. (Toer, 2002 p: 97)*

*One day Bahula asked his wife where it was her mother went. (Toer, 2002 p: 98)*

Due to the impact of the tough patriarchal culture at that time. The thought of unmarried women being unhappy was still common, society at those time always thinks that once a lady gets married all of her problems will be solved. She will get a proper roof, food, clothes, and many materials needs that are fulfilled by her husband, also she'll be protected from any worse rumors. Both her and her family, since Javanese society used to hold on to patriarchy tightly, they believe that men have more authority while women do not.

As stated before, femininity is not some trait that a person bears from birth but something that is constructed by society. The idea of a strong and independent woman was always considered as bad because society thought that once a woman can stand on her own feet. She won't need any men in her life again, they never realize that humans need each other help not only men to women. However, they also portray that men have a higher hierarchy than women

at the end of the novel. Calon Arang sins can only be cleansed by Empu Baradah, this shows that she was a weak woman who was still in need of man's help. Although she was able to do almost everything, by herself only.

*Empu Baradah then spoke to Calon Arang, the widow from Girah, about the virtues of goodness. His lesson enlightened the woman and made her aware of her crimes and the evil of her deeds. The knowledge brought her great happiness and she bowed to Empu Baradah. (Toer, 2002 p: 116)*

*After imparting his wisdom to Calon Arang, Empu Baradah then returned her to her lifeless state. She was at peace now; her soul had vanished and, with it, the danger that her life had previously meant for the people of Daha. (Toer, 2002 p:116)*

Till the end of her life, Calon Arang voice was never risen nor heard because they made her have no right to speak her heart out. Although she finally gets the peace and freedom that she had always sought for so long, still as the subaltern, her voice would not be counted. Rather than asking her the reason why she chose to taint her heart, they just left her alone with no moment she raises her voice. Even she had gone through many trials that made her choose to fight against the society, for the sake of her own daughter's better future.

Since she was a mother, no mother wants anything worst to happen to their children. A mother normally will do everything even if she has to sacrifice herself for a daughter, she loves the most. Although in practice, she chooses the wrong way all along just like what Calon Arang did. Instead of supporting her daughter, she makes murder scenes everywhere which made her daughter also judges as a witch. She was just a mother and a normal woman who deserves to get a place in society regardless of her status.

## CONCLUSION

This research concludes that Calon Arang was a very interesting character. She was the one who commit all the crimes that almost genocide the whole kingdom, yet she was the same person who was oppressed by society due to her differences from the other people. She has an unmarried daughter, a single mother, and a shaman yet also capable to perform

some dark arts magic rituals. Such as summoning her deity, Durga the goddess of destruction.

Meanwhile when she became a subaltern. She was an old single mother who only dreams about her daughter's better and settled future, as she realizes that she was already old enough. Calon Arang, wants her daughter to have a person who can protect and accompany her, she will do everything for her beloved ones. However, in the end, she was only judged as a bad old lady who has no voice nor right to speak her mind at the very last moment

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