

ALEX'S PERCEPTIONS OF HER ROLES IN IKA NATASSA'S DIVORTIARE TRILOGY

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ABSTRACT

Ika Natassa's *Divortiare* trilogy is Metropop genre novels which tell about Alex's life as a single woman and housewife. Thus, I want to focus on Alex's way of prioritizing her career as single woman or divorcee and Alex strategies for being a good wife in Ika Natassa's *Divortiare* trilogy. I am going to analyze Alex's life with women's roles theory related to patriarchal ideology in Indonesia. The first part of analysis discusses Alex's way to prioritize her career and her reason. The second part explains her strategies for being a good wife in her second marriage. Also, I find that Alex does her work so hard in order to prove that she can survive on her own. I also find that she embraces the traditional feminine roles in order to get a happy marriage. Therefore, she enjoys her life as a married woman rather than a successful single woman.

Keywords: Patriarchal, ideology, woman, roles, career, housewife

INTRODUCTION

One of the most popular genres is teen lit which targeted teenager as the readers. Seeing the popularity of that genre, many writers start to publish books that can also reach a wider range of target market, not limited only for teenagers. Recently, there is a special genre that is also widely produced in Indonesia known as Metropop. The exact definition of Metropop has not yet defined in dictionary. However, according to Gramedia, Metropop is a love story in urban woman's life which written in a fun and relaxing way (GWP, n.d.). Metropop is a sub-genre of chick lit which is created by one of the biggest publishers in Indonesia, Gramedia Pustaka Utama. The popularity of chick lit was one of the causes that Metropop was created. Metropop genre has some similarities with chick lit, yet it is written by local writers. Metropop mainly focuses on metropolitan life and related to the Indonesian society. The lifestyles depicted in Metropop revolve around young adults, both men and women, in the urban cities. (Fitriana, 2010).

Metropop is the label that is created by Gramedia Pustaka Utama which revolves around metropolitan life. Metropop does not use a formal Bahasa Indonesia as its language. They use informal language that is familiar to Indonesian people and often used by readers in their everyday life. Another characteristic that creates a big difference between Metropop and chick lit is the target market. Chick lit is mainly created by women for women about the life of single women. Meanwhile Metropop can be created by men and women. The target audience of Metropop is mainly women in their late twenties and early thirties (Fitriana, 2010).

One of the notable writers is Ika Natassa who is a banker, writer, and photographer. She has created a lot of best seller books since October 2007. Her first novel is *A Very Yuppy Wedding* has received Editor's Choice of Cosmopolitan and one of the nominees for Talented Young Writer Category in Kusala Sastra Khatulistiwa Award in 2008 and has reached eleven times reprinting until August 2014 (Natassa, 2007). After the success of her first novel, she then published her second novel entitled *Divortiare* on July 2008 (Natassa, 2008). Then her self-publish book, *Underground*, was produced in 2010. After the success of *A Very Yuppy Wedding* and *Divortiare* which are sold more than 30.000 copies, Ika Natassa continued to work on her next book, which is *Antalogi Rasa*, which is published in 2011 (Natassa, 2011). Then, Ika Natassa published a new Metropop novel with new format in August 2012. She published a second book of *Divortiare* called *Twivortiare* which is inspired by popular social

media, Twitter. The writing format is more or less the same as Twitter's format and so does the writing style (Natassa, 2012). Two years later, the continuation of *Twivortiare*, *Twivortiare 2*, was published. It becomes the most recent book that she wrote (Natassa, 2014). Besides her job as a writer, Ika spends her working time as a banker. She has achieved a lot of awards related to her work as a banker. In her book, a lot of banking terms such as refinancing, project cost, risk review, and profitability are frequently used.

The trilogy of *Divortiare* tells about the life of Alexandra Rhea, a successful career woman, who becomes a widow after she ends her marriage with her heart-surgeon husband, Beno. Seeing that Alex remains single, her family and friends want her to start dating and settle down instead working so hard as a banker. After her re-marriage with Beno, Alex tries to improve her relationship with him. At first, Alex tries to rebel against Beno's protectiveness, yet, later Alex finally accepts Beno's attitude. Alex tries to become the best wife for Beno by embracing traditional feminine role in their second marriage. Even though she cannot really cook, she makes the effort to cook the dishes that Beno likes. She also asks his permission if she wants to go to somewhere far or come home late. Alex tries to please Beno as much as she can. She tries her best to do her roles both as career women and housewife. One day, Alex finds out that her marriage is not complete without a baby. She wants to have a baby even though, at first, she promises herself and Beno that they will have a baby in two years. She feels so happy when she can give an offspring to Beno. As if she was punished for not being a good wife in the first marriage, Alex tries harder to be a better wife for Beno in order to have a happy marriage.

Although, Alex is a career woman, educated, smart, and financially independent, yet in her second marriage life she becomes a woman who is totally submissive to Beno. Her opinions about career and all her decisions about her career are different from when she is in her second marriage. Seeing from Alex's behavior, marriage is seen as a factor that can change her mind. Since Alex changes from independent woman to a housewife, many aspects of her life will also change. From being modern and independent woman, she needs to do her roles as a housewife in order to have a happy marriage with Beno.

In this paper, I want to analyze in how Alex prioritizing her career as a single woman and what her strategies for being a good wife are. I would like to discuss Alex's behavior and point of view of her career, independency as a single woman, and also her strategies for being a good wife in her second marriage.

To be able to answer the statement of the problem, I will use the theory of gender roles of patriarchal society in Indonesia. The concept of gender is defined as the state of being male or female. It means that the gender describes the idea of masculinity and femininity. There is no specific benchmark to define the idea of masculinity and femininity. The characters of masculinity and femininity derive from attitude and behavior of the human being. Looking from the sociologist perspective, gender is shaped by the way society organizes men and women's behavior and duty, later known as gender roles.

The following table shows the difference between men and women's roles:

Men's Roles	Women's roles
- Self-sufficient pillar of strength	- Serve her husband
- Fighter	- Child (Less mature)
- Breadwinner	- Mother (Bigger roles for nurturing children)
- Less responsibility in the household chores	- More responsibility in the household chores

(Wood, 2008, p.232-237)

There are three main roles for Javanese women. It is called 3M which refers to *Macak* (Dressing), *Manak* (Giving Birth), *Masak* (Cooking). The 3M term becomes really important in shaping the ideology of gender in Indonesia society. First, *Macak* (Dressing Up) is mainly talk about women who should take care and beautify themselves in order to attract the opposite sex or please their husband. Javanese women

should be able to adjust themselves in every situation. Second, *Manak* (Giving birth) is a Javanese term for women's duty to have children and to bring them up. Especially if a woman gives birth to a baby boy then her family will be very happy. The last term is *Masak* (cooking). Every Javanese woman should be able to cook and serve food for her family. If a woman cannot serve food to her family, it will give a bad image to her and her family (Smith-Hefner, 2007).

In Javanese tradition, it also uses a patriarchal ideology as the common one. According to oxforddictionaries.com, the word *patriarchy* means a system of society or government in which the father or eldest male is head of the family and descent is reckoned through the male line. The new cultural conception of womanhood is introduced by Madelon Djajadiningrat in the late 19th century is called "ibuism" by looking at Indonesian, especially, Javanese women. In her article "*Ibuism and Priyayization: Path to Power?*" she describes ibuism as "an ideology which sanctions any action provided it is taken by the mother who looks after her family, a group, a class, a company, or the state, without demanding any power or prestige in return." (Suryakusuma, 2011). She stated that women may participate in the development process in her work but at the same time they should not forget their *kodrat* (true nature) as wives and mothers.

ALEX AS A CAREER WOMAN AND HOUSEWIFE

In this chapter, I am going to analyze the way of the main character, Alex, prioritizes her career and describes her strategies for being a good wife in Ika Natassa's *Divortiare* trilogy.

Alex as a career woman

Alex's willingness to sacrifice her personal life because of work can be seen from her behavior towards her job.

Tiga hari? Gimana caranya aku mau istirahat tiga hari? Besok aku sudah rapat dengan direksi mengenai nasabah baruku. "Tapi..." "Nggak ada tapi-tapi, Lex." Ia meletakkan surat dokternya di bantalku. "Aku nggak bisa, Ben, besok itu..." (Divortiare, p.16).

Alex's statement that rejects Beno's advice shows that she regards her work to be more important than her health. She sacrifices her health and her time to rest in order to do her work. She also disregards Beno's advice as a doctor that it is necessary for her to rest. She thinks that resting is unimportant and wasting her time when she has a lot of things to do such as writing a report and attending some meetings.

Alex also sacrifices her time for a holiday in order to finish her work. She only talks about taking holiday, but she never takes action due to her prioritization on work.

"Kenapa sih lo nggak cuti aja?" "Nggak sempat, Win. Kerjaan gue tuh banyak banget," aku memberi alasan. "Alasan! Eh, Lex, kita udah tinggal bareng berapa lama, hampir dua tahun, kan? Setelah elo cerai ma Beno. Dan nggak pernah gue liat elo tuh liburan, jalan kek kemana (Divortiare, p.19).

From Wina's statement to have the real holiday instead of just dreaming shows that Alex never takes a holiday since she becomes a single woman. She devotes herself to her career by engaging herself in work. Alex is too committed in her work that she is always in constant worry about the tasks she has to do. She takes the responsibility to do her job very seriously.

Her being devoted to work not only robs her of her holiday, but also with her "me time"
Hari minggu gitu loh. Masa hari minggu aku harus bahas kasus nasabah dan prospek usaha dan economy outlook? Secara kalo hari Minggu aja yang kubaca di The Jakarta Post atau Kompas cuma komik Garfield (Divortiare, p.104).

Alex has to agree to work on Sunday is the evidence because she thinks that her work is the first priority. Her decision on following her boss to Bali reflects how she values her work, although at the same time she has to sacrifice her "me-time" on Sunday

Even though she has personal time to date with Denny, she has to cancel her date and work on the report instead.

Tidak ada jawaban lain yang bisa kuberikan kecuali, "Bisa, Pak." Aku menatap Denny dengan pandangan bersalah setelah memutuskan telepon. "Den, sorry banget ya, kayaknya kita nggak bisa nonton malam ini. Aku harus balik untuk lembur...Wajahnya terlihat kesal. (Divortiare, p.303-304)

Even though she feels guilty that she has to cancel her date, Alex's choice to go back to work rather than spend her time with her boyfriend shows that she is committed to her work so much. She chooses to break her promise to her boyfriend instead of refusing her boss's request. Thus, it shows that Alex's first priority is work.

It is interesting to know Alex's reason for being so concerned about her job that she is willing to put her personal time and love life aside for the demand of her work. The reason is because Alex thinks that her job is the only thing that she has to support her lifestyle.

Wina bilang aku gila sepatu. Aku bilang aku hanya ingin melindungi aset terpenting yang dimiliki perempuan, which also legalizes my outrageous spending on Victoria's secret and Agent Provocateur (Divortiare, p.102).

The statement above shows that Alex thinks that luxurious lifestyle, which is revolving around branded things, can boost her confidence. When Alex mentions the important aspect of woman, she means to protect her appearance. By giving more attention to her appearance, she is able to show that she can maintain her own life. With good appearance, people will think that she is independent and able to take care of herself.

Alex works so hard not only for her reputation in her working place but also to prove herself to Beno that she is able to survive without him.

"Take it. I don't need it." Rasanya kepingin menampar wajahnya yang arogan itu kalau saja aku berhadapan muka dengannya. "I don't need your charity," ketusku. (Divortiare, p.143)

From Alex's statement that she did not need Beno's charity, it shows that Alex does not want to be pitied by Beno. Alex proves to Beno that even without the money, she will be able to survive by herself. Thus, her reason to work hard to achieve high reputation is to prove to Beno that she can live well on her own and she does not need Beno's pity on her.

Alex as a housewife

The significance changes especially happen in Alex's attitude on her second marriage. She tries to become a good housewife and a career woman at the same time. Alex uses the concept even though she knows that she will have more burden than before. She needs to divide her attention as a career woman, who has responsibility on her work, and as Beno's wife. She does what she cannot do in her first marriage such as cooking and serving her husband.

One of traditional feminine roles in Indonesia, especially Javanese patriarchal society, is *macak* (Dressing up). When she attends Beno's friend's wedding, Alex gives extra effort by wearing *kebaya* and *kain*.

Gue ngomong ini sambil menghela napas nahan emosi ngeliat Beno masih main Wii sementara gue udah cantik gini mau ke kawinan temennya. Catet ya, kawinan temennya, bukan temen gue. Me: "Beno! Aku udah gerah pake kebaya gini. Cepetan donk, Hon." Him: "Buka lagi aja, Lex, kalau gak tahan, 15 menit lagi deh, dikit lagi." (Twivortiare, p.25-26)

From the statement above, Alex wants to look presentable in front of Beno's colleagues even though she is not comfortable. She is willing to wear *kebaya* or traditional Javanese clothes in order to look pretty even though it makes Alex's body feel uncomfortable. Thus she sacrifices her comfort in order to keep the honor of her husband. Furthermore, Alex also emphasizes that it is Beno's friend's wedding and not hers. It shows that Alex puts an extra effort even though she is not really familiar with the bride and groom.

Alex also tries hard to embrace the concept of *masak* (cooking) in her second marriage. In her opinion, she needs to take care of the household chores, including cleaning the house and cooking.

Gue gak bisa masak sama sekali. :) RT @PalupiAngga: suka masakin buat Beno nggak? Masak rawon atau something selain telur goreng. (Twivortiare, p.95)

He just woke up, and the first thing that he said was: "Lex, laper. Scrambled egg ya. Boleh pake sosis nggak?...si manja nyebelin ini nggak suka kalau bukan gue yang bikin. (Twivortiare, p.117)

From the first quotations, Alex shows that she has a limited cooking skill. She can just make simple things with simple ingredients such as scrambled egg. However, she is now a housewife so she needs to learn how to cook and prepare food for her husband. In the end, Alex feels proud when Beno likes her cooking. Thus, from the two quotations above, Alex embraces one of the concepts of 3M which is *masak* (cooking) to become a good wife for Beno. Also, Alex unconsciously embraces the concept of *ibuism*, which she had rejected before. The fact that she feels empty when she cannot do her roles as a housewife proves that the concept of dual role is completely exists in Alex's life.

In addition, when she cannot apply the concept of *manak* (giving birth) in her second marriage, she puts all the blame into herself. When she finds out the result of the test-pack is negative, she is very sad. But what makes her sadder is Beno will also be sad hearing the result. She blames herself when she cannot give happiness to Beno.

All I can think about is how sad Beno will be when I tell him what we have failed again this month. (Twivortiare 2, p.119)

Padahal gue bikin diri gue seneng aja susah karena memikirkan nggak hamil-hamil ini. (Twivortiare 2, p.119)

It's negative. Again. Emang gue nggak layak jadi ibu kayaknya. (Twivortiare 2, p.62)

The first and the second quotation above show that Alex blames herself when she is not pregnant. The first quotation shows that she puts the blame on her own self because she will make Beno sad hearing that she fails again. The third quotation also emphasizes that Alex feels that she is not worthy to earn the title as a mom. Seeing her blaming her own self, it shows that Alex is actually wanted to apply the concept of *manak* (giving birth) yet she cannot do it.

Konco wingking (a person behind a man) also become Alex's strategies to be a good wife in her second marriage. As a woman, Alex needs to be in her husband's side. On the other words, she needs to support every decision of her husband even it will make Alex has to sacrifice some aspect of her life. "By the end of the night, I said yes. I can't stop him from pursuing his passion, right?" (Twivortiare, p.66) Alex statement shows that she supports Beno completely even though she will not meet him for a long time. In the end, she gives up her time with Beno in order to let him go. Thus, the concept of *konco wingking* has become Alex's principle in the second marriage.

CONCLUSION

From the analysis, it is proven that even though Alex can be categorized as modern woman who lives in metropolitan city, she still needs to embrace the traditional concept of women in Indonesia. Through her life as a divorcee who is financially independent, Alex cannot find her happiness, yet she finds her happiness when she becomes a wife. Seeing from how she prioritizes her family first before her job, I can conclude that the patriarchal ideology in Indonesia affects Alex's life. Even though she is modern and independent woman, she embraces the ideology. It proves that the patriarchal ideology and traditional feminine roles in Indonesia still become the ideologies that even a modern, successful, smart, and educated woman like Alex also becomes the subject of patriarchal ideology.

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