

## The Curse of Beauty: Sexuality Exploitation towards Sales Promotion Girls' Body Viewed from the Islamic Perspective

Fiqih Aisyatul Farokhah, Sri Kusumo Habsari, Mugijatna

*Universitas Sebelas Maret Surakarta.*

*echa.elfaro@student.uns.ac.id*

### Abstract

Sexuality is an interesting yet controversial topic in Indonesian culture. The discourse of morality makes it taboo in public. In patriarchy culture, women are always placed as an object of sexuality. In Islam, it also becomes an important topic discussed in Alquran. Now the phenomenon of sex exploitation spreads through the oppression of women's body. The capitalist uses it to construct a discourse of women's beauty, to exploit women's body, and to use seduction to obtain some profits. One of the examples is sales promotion girl (SPG) phenomenon. This reality has influenced some novelists to raise this theme as their main novel topic. One of them is Indah Hanaco. This paper reveals the representation of women's sexuality in Indah Hanaco's novel entitled "The Curse of Beauty". Indah Hanaco had been influenced by the phenomenon of SPG surroundings. Many SPG had trapped in prostitute caused by their sociality lifestyle constructed by the capitalist. They were forced to sell their body to get money to beautify their appearance. It became very important because it was an asset for them. Actually, it was not only about economic motif, but also psychological motif which affected their consciousness. This phenomenon was also widely discussed from the Islamic perspective, especially in the Alqur'an.

**Keywords:** Sexuality Exploitation, Sales Promotion Girl (SPG), The Curse of Beauty, Islamic Perspective.

### Abstrak

Seksualitas adalah topik yang menarik tetapi kontroversial dalam budaya Indonesia. Wacana moralitas menjadikan sex tabu di khalayak umum. Dalam budaya patriarki, perempuan selalu ditempatkan sebagai objek seksualitas. Dalam Islam, itu juga menjadi topik penting yang dibahas di Alquran. Sekarang fenomena eksploitasi seks menyebar melalui pelecehan terhadap tubuh wanita. Penguasa kapitalis menggunakannya untuk membangun wacana kecantikan wanita, mengeksploitasi tubuh wanita, dan menggunakan rayuan untuk mendapatkan beberapa keuntungan. Salah satu contohnya adalah fenomena *Sales Promotion Girl (SPG)*. Kenyataan ini telah mempengaruhi beberapa novelis untuk mengangkat tema ini sebagai topik utama novel mereka. Salah

satunya adalah Indah Hanaco. Artikel ini mengungkap representasi seksualitas perempuan dalam novel Indah Hanaco berjudul “*The Curse of Beauty*”. Indah Hanaco telah dipengaruhi oleh fenomena lingkungan SPG. Banyak SPG telah terjebak dalam pelacuran yang disebabkan oleh gaya hidup sosialitas mereka yang dibangun oleh kapitalis. Mereka terpaksa menjual tubuhnya untuk mendapatkan uang untuk mempercantik penampilan mereka. Itu menjadi sangat penting karena itu adalah aset bagi mereka. Sebenarnya bukan hanya motif ekonomi, tetapi juga motif psikologis yang mempengaruhi kesadaran mereka. Fenomena ini juga banyak dibicarakan dalam perspektif Islam, terutama dalam Alqur’an.

**Kata kunci:** Eksploitasi Seksual, *Sales Promotion Girl (SPG)*, *The Curse of Beauty*, Perspektif Islam.

## Introduction

Sexuality is always interesting to talk about even though it is always overshadowed by taboos. It is understood as “a core human aspect throughout its life and includes sex, gender identity and role, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, romance, and reproduction”.<sup>1</sup> The taboo of sexuality is constructed in the culture of society as a form of discipline of the body. In addition, religious morality curbs sexuality to be expressed openly.

Sexuality is spoken of at certain limits as the human nature of continuing offspring based on religious norms. The discourse of religious morality is in control of the sexuality of society, especially in most parts of Indonesia. This reality is parallel to Foucault’s opinion that “the phrasing of certain words, the politeness of phrases, in short, all censorship seems to be only a secondary mechanism when compared to the great conquest: how to make sex moral and technically useful”.<sup>2</sup>

Michel Foucault says “the taboo of sexuality is a silent conspiracy; discipline based on moral values, and social prohibition as a form of social control appropriate cultural construction”.<sup>3</sup> Sexual taboo puts women as the object of desire that must be shackled so as not to provoke male lust. Therefore, the issue of sex and sexuality is always discussed in silence.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ampy Kali, *Diskursus Seksualitas Michel Foucault*, (Maumere: Ledalero, 2013), p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> Hidayat, S. Rahayu. 1997. *Sejarah Seksualitas: Seks dan Kekuasaan Michael Foucault* (Jakarta: Gramedia). p.22.

<sup>3</sup> Ampy Kali, *Diskursus Seksualitas Michel Foucault*, (Maumere: Ledalero, 2013), p. 15.

However, capitalism and politics become actors of cultural change. The paradox that lies behind the cultural taboo of sexuality is used to gain many financial benefits. Sexuality is exposed to the public. Lust becomes the booster of the popularity of a product. In the production of lust, women are always the object. Their bodies are considered capable of increasing product sales. This is because the female body has been constructed by culture as an invader of lust.

The body with its parts has been filled with cultural symbolism, public and private, positive and negative, political and economic, social, moral, and controversial.<sup>4</sup> They have their body but do not have the power to control it. Women body is seen in reproduction role of species biologically and it closer to nature. The identification of women with the body is used as a proof that women are not enough to think and the consequence is women is lower than men socially and politically.

Women sexuality which is attached to their natural body is often opposed to men, then they are undertaken the binary opposition like feminine/masculine, inferior/superior, private/public, object/subject., passive/active, etc where right side is seen as the positive and superior to men while left side is negative and inferior for women. Women sex is made into a myth as passive sex, not consistent, strange (pathologic), therefore it is not more than the sexuality object of men. It has been embedded in their mind that their sexual satisfaction is located and depended on their role as the canister of the sexual satisfaction of men. Men like the conqueror, the predator are a normal thing to be sexual subject. It is different from women who are natural as the side that is conquered or sexual object.

The problem of women oppression is often experienced by most of them in the world not except for Muslim women. Although, Islam has obligated them to cover all of their parts of the body except face and forehead, sexual abusing still approach them. This obligation is clearly stated in Al-Qur'an.<sup>5</sup> The sexual abusing happens everywhere and every time in private place and public place. Moreover, it can happen in social media. This situation can be seen from mass media or televisions that show the case of their personal documentation appears in social media suddenly because of the hacker.

The other serious problem which is faced by women is sexual exploitation through their sensual body potency. It commonly happens in working world.

---

<sup>4</sup> Piliang, Yasraf Amir. 2003. *Hipersemiotika, Tafsir Cultural Studies Atas Matinya Makna*. (Yogyakarta: Jalasutra.p. 11-12.

<sup>5</sup> See Q.S. An-Nur:31

Not few all of the professions that required them to look attractive even they are Muslim. While in Islam, women appearance should be natural in front of the public. One of the jobs that are liked more by them is *Sales Promotion Girl (SPG)*.<sup>6</sup> Suitable with the name, therefore many of the workers are women. Even there is also some of *Sales Promotion Boy (SPB)* now.<sup>7</sup> This job is also followed by Muslim women. Even they are Muslim, they are still demanded to look attractive with their hijab. Their clothes are strict in their hip, even though in their arm and foot.

Islam comes to place people in right place honorably.<sup>8</sup> This ayat talks every individual has the same position in this world. Both men and women have right to get the equal right. If men have right to get a high education so do them. If men have right to work, then they should have too. As long as what they do is right and suitable with the religious norms, then, it does not matter. They are only differentiated from their charity (Amal).

Therefore, Islam gives the chance to women to study and work. Even though, this possibility sometimes can be agreed with the certain requirement. For example for the married women, they should have permission from their husband. It should be done because of avoiding misunderstanding between them. If their husband does not give them the permission while they can carry out the duty of being household and carrier women and the work is good, thus they are allowed to refuse their husband's prohibition. The prophet Muhammad argues "a person who does not care about people's matters around him, he is not a part of their group".<sup>9</sup>

Women who work as SPG never realize that they have been used by the capitalists to get big profit. They are exploited through the beautiful image which is created by mass media. They bound only from their physic and appearing. They should have smooth skin, sparkling eyes, soft hair, and dimpled body. For getting this body, there is beauty product is prepared by the capitalists such; the various cream, shampoo, soft lens, aerobic places, plastic surgeon etc. these

---

<sup>6</sup> The definition of *Sales Promotion Girl (SPG)* is a woman who is recruited by a company to promote the product. This meaning can be seen in Len D'innocenzo & Jack Cullen. 2011. *Sales Profesional*. (Yogyakarta: ORYZA). P. 10

<sup>7</sup> The definition of *Sales Promotion Boy (SPG)* is a man who is recruited by a company to promote the product. This meaning can be seen in Len D'innocenzo & Jack Cullen. 2011. *Sales Profesional*. (Yogyakarta: ORYZA). P. 12

<sup>8</sup> See QS. Al-hujurat : 49. This ayat is explained in Shihab, Quraish. 2011. *Perempuan*. (Tangerang: Lentera Hati). P. 388.

<sup>9</sup> Hadist shahih, see Shihab, Quraish. 2011. *Perempuan*. (Tangerang: Lentera Hati). P. 389

treatments regardless bring them to consume. Finally, they spend a lot of money to beautify their body.

This social reality is portrayed clearly by novel authors. One of them are inspired by SPG's true story life is Indah Hanaco entitled *The Curse of Beauty* (2012).<sup>10</sup> This novel tells about a woman who works as SPG because she is oppressed by life necessities. The main character is told from *broken home's* family. Mental burden influences her in daily life. Besides, the profession which should attract the consumer to buy the product that is offered, an SPG is demanded to have good looking. Attractive appearance needs capital. This condition that makes her trapped to her side job, prostitution. It means that SPG's life is interesting. Therefore, the description of SPG's life that is written by the authors is interesting to be analyzed.

Sumrahadi illuminates SPG (Sales Promotion Girls)'s consolation method. They are the backbone of marketing division in every company to attract the consumer.<sup>11</sup> They have been tried especially to know the sensual potency of their body. Sexy clothes should be worn to communicate the body and themselves as consolation work method. This phenomenon shows that consumption does not only talk about the product but also desire. This potency is used by the capitalist to receive the big profit through the body image that spreads in mass media. Beauty standard makes women willing to do everything and consume much beauty product while they also do not notice that they are being a part of the capitalist tool to get much income from the consumer.

This research tries to discuss the reason of Indah Hanaco as the author of *The Curse of Beauty* appoints SPG as the theme of her novel. Then, it is represented in their sexuality as SPG. Then, as the consequence of their profession, they get the oppression of their body which is constructed by capitalists. And finally, these problems will be seen from the perspective of Islam since there are many women Muslim who also work as SPG.

---

<sup>10</sup> A novel tells about the metrolifestyle Sales Promotion Girl which is based on the true story, written by Indah Hanaco.

<sup>11</sup> Baudrillard, Jean. 2006. *Ekstasi Komunikasi*. (Yogyakarta: Kreasi Wacana).p. xxvi.

## Method

The research is focused on analyzing the representation of the sexuality of SPG in the novel *“The Curse of Beauty”*. The design of the research is descriptive qualitative. Data are taken from all descriptive concerning SPG body appearance to understand the narrative meaning of the body. It applies Foucault’s the politics of the body theory while it also uses Islam perspective to take a stance on women sexuality problem. In fact, sexuality also becomes the serious problem which is faced by Islam now. Although, in the fundamental of Islam law (Al-Qur’an and Hadist) has explained.

According to Foucault “Sex is not only covering feeling and pleasure, law or prohibition but also the truthfulness and falseness. The truth about sex should become the essential thing, useful or dangerous, precious or frightened. In short, it is built as the truth bet”. He also argues “sex depends on various body disciplines”. It also becomes the instigator of the appearance of every experiment and wisdom. It is a part of sexuality that creates economic-political from the desire to know.<sup>12</sup>

The body does not have freedom. It is like a machine controlled by a power. This phenomenon is called bio-power. In the development of capitalism, biopower is an essential element to growth reinforcement and obedience. Hence, politic of the body is a way to discipline and control the body according to the interests of the ruler, who in this case are the capitalists. This theory is used to reveal the power of the capitalist to control the SPG’s body as like in *“The Curse of Beauty”*.

## Bias Islamic View of Women

In the past, women are always placed as the second creature that has a role to care and educate their children. This opinion is still kept on the society’s mind. It is influenced by the patriarchal culture. It becomes the continual problem which should be faced by women in western or Muslim women. Nowadays, this issue becomes an unsolved problem in gender equalities. They claim the equal position of their position in society and all of the life’s aspects.

The gender inequality also becomes the complicated trouble of Islam today. Arbitrary treatment of men Muslim which happens to women Muslim is the main cause. They feel their freedom as the same human creature of Allah

---

<sup>12</sup> This Foucault’s theory can be looked at Hidayat, S. Rahayu. 1997. *Sejarah Seksualitas: Seks dan Kekuasaan Michael Foucault* (Jakarta: Gramedia). P. 68, 168, 91.

is grumbled. They recognize that all of the ayat of Al-Qur'an and Hadist only benefit them. They are only oppressed by them because they consider they are created as the khalifah (Leader) on Earth as like Al-Qur'an.<sup>13</sup>

However, they forget Al-Qur'an cares about women's fortune. Islam teaches to respect each other as Allah's creature. It forbids hurting the other creature. Quraish Shihab in his book entitled "*Perempuan*" says cannot be denied ignoring women means ignoring a half of social potency, and looking down on them means looking down to all of the humans because nobody is born through them except Adam and Hawa.<sup>14</sup>

Islam through Al-Qur'an has divided the duty for men and women based on their nature. Therefore, placing women as a weak creature who does not have right to explore their skill, taking advantage of their sensual body potency, and oppressing them are including to demeaning others. And it contradicts with the human right. This condition is appropriate with Shihab argumentation, a person who does not give women their right as an aligned partner of men and look down to them using religious pretense and interpreting text – an old interpretation which appears when they are still looked down by the world in the past.<sup>15</sup>

Al-Qur'an clarifies some of the men are from women. And Allah only differentiates both of them based on their Amal (charity).<sup>16</sup> The other Ayat explains Adam is whispered by the evil mind to eat the forbidden fruit by his own self.<sup>17</sup> It is not Hawa's fault. It means that women body which is created differently from men with their beauty does not become the reason for them to blame women as the seducer. These explanations show Islam also fight for women's fortune as the same Allah's creature. And never differentiate both men and women. It places them suitable to their duty based on their nature.

## Islam, Women, Beauty, and Sex

Talking about women cannot be separated from beauty because it is a gift from Allah. Beauty can be one of sexual appeal that can lure the sexual desire. But the meaning of beauty is abstract. A human with their mental ability creates the concept of beauty. However, it always changes because there is an influence

---

<sup>13</sup> al-An biya' ayat: 107

<sup>14</sup> Shihab, Quraish. 2011. *Perempuan*. (Tangerang: Lentera Hati). p. 33.

<sup>15</sup> Shihab, Quraish. 2011. *Perempuan*. (Tangerang: Lentera Hati). p. 34.

<sup>16</sup> (QS. Ali 'Imran: 195),

<sup>17</sup> (QS. Thaha: 20)

from the capitalists through mass media and the development of technology. Both of them create the definition of beauty through the standard of beauty which becomes the trend in each period. Beautiful women are women who have white bright skin, long hair, and slim body. This beauty is obtained by a plastic surgeon, the consumption of cosmetics products, using medical tools etc. Mass media changes lifestyle of Indonesian women that have simple lifestyle becomes the consumptive lifestyle. According to Baran, women magazines have a big role to create the character and lifestyle of Indonesian women in this time.<sup>18</sup>

These conditions can be seen from the beauty conception which is standardized by them in every country. In Western, the concept of beauty is realized by the appearance of the famous doll, Barbie. It becomes popular in 1959 until 2009. It has the perfect body. It is a young girl that has a slim body, white skin, long hair and beautiful eyes. Its popularity makes it is the icon of the culture.<sup>19</sup> Then, women begin to create their body to be similar to this doll. They do many body treatments such as a plastic surgery to make their face beautiful. Do strict diet to make their body slim. Brightening their skin uses the whitening product. And hair extension is for changing the short hair being long hair.

As the same as of Western, Indonesia also has a standard of beauty which changes every period. In Old Order, beautiful women are described as women who have tan skin or yellow skin, long black hair, and good manners. They also should be Indonesian indigenous women, not mixed residents. Moreover, this definition changes in New Order period. Beautiful women are valued for everything that can be seen, during they are nice to be seen and during they have perfectness compared to the other woman, then those are a category of beautiful women. It doesn't matter from anywhere they come from.<sup>20</sup> These conditions show how capitalism and mass media play a trick on the construction of women beauty.

Islam also describes the beauty of women in Al-Qur'an based on Arabians' criteria. In the past people in Arab do not like women with blue eyes, therefore,

---

<sup>18</sup> This citation is written by Nur Istifani Rahayu in (Handoko, M. Aan, Umbala, N. Fina, Suganda, R. Zulfahmie dkk. 2013. *Identitas Perempuan dalam Majalah*. (Yogyakarta: UII Press). p. 5

<sup>19</sup> Roger, F. Mary. 2009. *Barbie Culture, Ikon Budaya Konsumerisme*. (Yogyakarta: Relief). P. 5.

<sup>20</sup> This citation is written by Nur Istifani Rahayu in (Handoko, M. Aan, Umbala, N. Fina, Suganda, R. Zulfahmie dkk. 2013. *Identitas Perempuan dalam Majalah*. (Yogyakarta: UII Press). p. 4.



in Surat Thoha tells the resident of the hell is the blue eyes women.<sup>21</sup> It is because the blue eyes are the depiction of the eyes that feel sick, pain, and suffer. On the contrary, it is mentioned that the resident of heaven is people with white eyes and black pupil. The shape of the eyes is wide, round or slant eyes. Those are the portrayed of the beautiful eyes. Another ayat describe the beautiful eyes is told with dazzling and sparkling as like a pearl.<sup>22</sup>

Nowadays, the development technology changes the beauty standard based on the desire. For example, Most of the researchers always choose men as the appraiser of the standard of beauty. However, every man has a different opinion about women beauty. Most men also categorize beautiful and attractive women as women who have a big breast and buttocks. These parts are the part of the body that becomes the main of sexual attraction. Pranoto argues woman breast is made into a myth as the main sexual attraction while the vagina is in the second place and the buttocks are in the third place.<sup>23</sup> It shows the beauty of a woman is symbolized by having a big breast.

Because of this perspective, women leave their essential beauty becomes pseudo beauty. Islam never forbids them to dress up and look beautiful in public. On the other hand, it invites them to be beautiful naturally without cosmetic product, sparkling accessories, plastic surgeon, body treatment etcetera which will spend their money. Allah creates plants and the other natural components that will be useful for a human to care their body and help them survive unadorned. This recommendation can be seen in Al-Qur'an consisting of the prohibition to change human body excessively.<sup>24</sup>

This review indicates Islam tries to protect women beauty with the true ways and do not damage their natural beauty because of the deception of capitalists through the image which is displayed by mass media and technology development. It does not want to see they will regret in the future because they follow their wrong desire to beautify their body using unhealthy process.

---

<sup>21</sup> Surat Thoha ayat 102

<sup>22</sup> QS. Al-Waqi'ah: 22

<sup>23</sup> Pranoto, Naming. 2010. *Her Story: Sejarah Perjalanan Payudara*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius. P. 14

<sup>24</sup> See QS. An-Nisa': 119

## Sensuality and Sexuality Oppression: The politics of the body in the “Curse of Beauty” (Islam Perspective)

In the previous chapter, it is mentioned this paper uses the politics of the body of Foucault theory to analyze to analyze the phenomenon of women oppression in Indah Hanaco’s *The Curse of Beauty* Novel. Thus, it is better to understand what does the politics of the body is. Then this paper will be continued with how Islam views this phenomenon of women oppression through their sensual body potency.

The politics of the body can be understood as Foucault says that the body is always disciplined in the name of the medical science, demography, economic, and political problems by the power of a regime. He also says: One of these poles, the first to be formed, it seems centered on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls, all this was ensured by the procedures of power that characterized the discipline: an anatomo-politics of the human body.<sup>25</sup>

*The Curse of Beauty* is a novel of Indah Hanaco tells the condition of a friend of the main character named Kimi. She is a best friend of the main character named Leala. Kimi is from a poor family who has to work for funding her family because her father has passed away and her mother is too old for work. She has to responsible for this because she is the first child of her parent. She cannot get a high education like her friend. With senior high school certificate, she can only get a job as sales promotion girl (SPG).

It is a job, which should always wear a mini dress and put heavy make up to attract the consumers. Sometimes there is no connection between her appearances with the product. She also must keep smile to consumer whatever her condition even she is in tired or unfeeling good. For the salary is based on the amount of the product selling for an event. But it can be expensive when she gets very big event such car showroom, government agenda, celebration event etc. on the contrary, sometimes she has to walk all day to sell the product. She has to offer it to people whom she met.

This condition implicates women who work as SPG is underestimated and looked down. It clearly contradicts with Islam certainty which respects the human right to get the equality. As the weak creature, women should be helped

---

<sup>25</sup> Michel, Foucault. 1978. *The History of Sexuality*. New York; Pantheon Books. P. 139.

and protected by men as the stronger one. In Al-Qur'an, mentions both of men and women have the same position. Moreover, men have the responsibility more to look after and rescue them.<sup>26</sup>

The worst thing about her life, she can get a bad image from the society. They consider this job is not human because she will trap the prostitution as soon as possible. They believe that she not only offers the product but also her body. This condition happens to Leala and Kimi. For the first time, Kimi is a person who is common SPG. Although she has two years become SPG, but she never comes in the prostitution until she met a man who is fifteen years older than her. He is too old to become her lover. Moreover, he is a married person. She never cares about that.

As long as she is happy and he can fulfill her necessities without hard work, it is never minded to her. Leala as her friend also disagrees with her life. But she can do nothing because it is her life choice. And she also in enough age to differentiate what is good or bad for her. Who knows that Leala will be like her. She becomes SPG now. For the first time, she also becomes the professional SPG until she meets Levi, a first man who has shared the bed with her. From this situation, she finally changes her lover and she has moved into the different world, prostitution.

It does not end here; Leala finally becomes a concubine of Irvin while Kimi is still in her position with the married man. Both of them never think that they will be like now. When we see this condition, we can imagine that both of them are a little part of women who have a tragic fortune like them. They have to give up their dreams only for resisting. For them, who have chosen to sell their body because they do not have the other things to be relied on getting money. They do not have skill. They only have low education. The work chance is limit for them. Sometimes, they do not have support from their family. The consideration of women is not good enough to get a high education because they will end in the kitchen still rooted in the social mind.

The story above is a portrayed of the SPG phenomenon which happens in the real life because literary work is inspired by the condition social life of the author. Moreover, the story of this novel is a true story (it can be seen on the cover of the novel). As like Suwardi Endraswara says the text of literary is always born in not vacuum condition. The author is affected by the context. The environment often becomes the strong encouragement of the birth of it. It

---

<sup>26</sup> QS. At-Taubah: 71

does not know the sterilization idea. Every author is always given a ride by the context which goes around him.<sup>27</sup>

A piece of the story here illustrates women still do not have a chance to get high education until they should have a profession (SPG) which uses their sensual body potency to work. This situation clearly contradicts with the human right. The prophet Muhammad states looking for knowledge is an obligation for every Muslim.<sup>28</sup> Muslim here means women Muslim.

In the society mind, has become rooted that the duty of women is only taking care of their children. But how come they do it if their education is low. In the past, women ask directly to the prophet Muhammad to be given the certain time to study with him, and their request is approved.<sup>29</sup> The prophet Muhammad also says; “anybody who takes on the way to seek the knowledge, Allah will make easy for him a way to the heaven.”<sup>30</sup>

In short, women never choose to get a bad profession if they have high education. In fact, they chose this profession (as SPG) because it never sees them from their background education. Islam never permits them to work if their job is not good. Although, SPG wears the veil now their clothes are still not proper to be wore. Their clothes are still strict and showing their body dimpled. It is better for them to continue their study. It is more useful for people around them to help them to get high education. As like Al-Qur’an says “help each other all of you in goodness, on the contrary, do not help each other in evilness.”<sup>31</sup>

Foucault analyzes that sexuality always relates to the power system. It is a nucleus aspect of human such sex, identity, and gender, sexuality orientation, eroticism, pleasure, enjoyment, intimacy and reproduction.<sup>32</sup> In *Greco Roman* period, self-control to the sexuality becomes the main character. In middle ages, sexuality problem becomes church authority. In the modern era, the sexuality becomes country affairs to keep economic stability and politic. Therefore, it always becomes a pretense from the truth which is covered for the sake certain importance.

---

<sup>27</sup> Endraswara, Suwardi. 2013. *Teori Kritik Sastra*. Yogyakarta: CAPS. P. 34.

<sup>28</sup> HR. ath-Thabrani through Ibnu Mas’ud r.a see Shihab, Quraish. 2011. *Perempuan*. (Tangerang: Lentera Hati) p. 395.

<sup>29</sup> Shihab, Quraish. 2011. *Perempuan*. (Tangerang: Lentera Hati). P. 396.

<sup>30</sup> HR. at-Thirmidzi through abu huraitah see Shihab, Quraish. 2011. *Perempuan*. (Tangerang: Lentera Hati). P. 395

<sup>31</sup> Q.S. Al-Maidah ayat: 32

<sup>32</sup> Kali, Ampy. 2013. *Diskursus Seksualitas Michael Foucault*. (Yogyakarta: Solusi Offset). P. 57.

The importance which is hidden behind the sexuality always places women as the object. Women body is considered as desire instigator, moreover, in their breast. Pranoto argues that breast is a part of women body which becomes the most interesting for men.<sup>33</sup> Historically, it actually becomes fertility symbol in many civilizations. For the example in Javanese civilization, there are many relieve of the temple that place breast symbols are next to vagina and penis symbol. If this condition is seen at the present time, it should be spoken as porn. On the contrary, the visitors amaze with those historical cultural work.

However, Islam never treats women like this. When wahyu comes, there is no implicit and explicit statement from Al-Qur'an that supports the argumentation men are the leader naturally. Al-Qur'an never forbids women to be a leader. Moreover, it also has explained a woman leader story named Balqis. She is the only one of leader who gets praise in Al-Qur'an except the prophets.<sup>34</sup> From this short story, we can see that as the God creature women also have the same position as like men. They are also permitted to be a leader, but the fact; they are humbled by being the object of men satisfaction through their sensual potency.

Now, sex becomes the commodity of the economy. In this era, every activity is purposed to arise the sexual desire, especially in the business world. This matter can be seen in everything that has functioned as the media of communication such as newspaper, magazine, television, films, advertisement, novel, poem, drama, handphone etc. All of them will give the sensual stimulation. For this motive, they will use women as the tool. Unfortunately, they do not know that they have been used.

The other way to abuse them is most of men state as the supporter of women, but they have abused them cryptically. For example; they are employed people whom can create the mode that shows the women body and ask them to wear it in the wrong place. Look at the sports clothes for men and women. For men, the clothes are not too open. It is different from women clothes; there are many parts of it which is too open and tight for showing their body dimpled.

Then, women also are seen only from their physic and appearance by people through mass media. Their body is constructed to be beauty, having

---

<sup>33</sup> Pranoto, Naming. 2010. *Her Story: Sejarah Perjalanan Payudara*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius. P. 15

<sup>34</sup> This story can be looked at QS. An-Naml: 29-44. This explanation is from Shihab, Quraish. 2011. *Perempuan*. (Tangerang: Lentera Hati). P. 121.

smooth bright skin, sparkling eyes, long soft hair, high slim body, curled eyelash, pointed nose, white neat teeth etc. these kinds of the women characters which is created by mass media. Being SPG means being a woman with this competency. For having this quality, she should do many treatments which spend much money. As Baudrillard says public space is signed by advertisements. He gives addition that advertisement colonizes hinge of life because public stage and public space have been changed by ventilation, circulation room and huge connector that connect each other.<sup>35</sup>

Next, it is used by capitalists to get any profits. They are showed it using advertisement. An Advertisement shows image world. An image that is produced by capitalism describes that men eyes are seemingly interesting to that standard. This condition is called standard beauty construction that is created by the capitalist. Women do not realize that beauty standard has controlled their own body. Beauvoir has states that body is the root of the oppression of women body itself.<sup>36</sup>

As SPG, she is demanded to do everything her boss wants. Barker quotes Foucault's argumentation; the ruler, wherever he is both in conscious and unconscious conditions always produces knowledge through language to create a culture that aims to get the power.<sup>37</sup> The formulation of culture is through the discourse that develops in society. It automatically will construct the differences, disciplining, and corrections to the behavior and legitimation of him. Therefore, he is unconsciously controlled by society because it refers to the personal or interpersonal ruler. Then he is formulated to be a subject loyal.

Although Islam has its own way to solve the sexual problem people are seemingly blind. None of Islam rules want to discriminate both men and women, moreover, it tries to make they get their right suitable for their position. But now together with the presence of new capitalism through mass media and technology development, they have humiliated women. They never care their suffering. What they know is they will get big profit from them. However, they know their action is wrong and immoral. As like Quraish Shihab says "now the discussion about sex digresses from the religious demand and moral".<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Baudrillard, Jean. 2006. *Ekstasi Komunikasi*. (Yogyakarta: Kreasi Wacana). P. 109

<sup>36</sup> Prabasmoro, Aquarini Priyatno. 2007. *Kajian Budaya, Feminis Tubuh, Sastra, dan Budaya Pop*. (Yogyakarta: Jalasutra). P. 50-51

<sup>37</sup> Baker, Chris. 1999. *Cultural Studies*. London: SAGE publication. P. 109.

<sup>38</sup> Shihab, Quraish. 2011. *Perempuan*. (Tangerang: Lentera Hati). P. 424.

In this context, women body becomes practice arena and tool to form the power. However, the body as the individual possession must be a personal region where a person has totally right to manage. When social control begins to contact with the body that is a private world, women do not have a freedom again. It can be seen to the SPG that their body is managed in every social practice as the tool to get big profit for the capitalist. Here Foucault states “Sex is not only covering feeling and pleasure, low or prohibition but also the truthfulness and falseness. The truth about sex should become the essential thing, useful or dangerous, precious or frightened. In short, it is built as the truth bet”. He also argues “sex depends on various body disciplines”. It also becomes the instigator of the appearance of every experiment and wisdom. It is a part of sexuality that creates economic-political from the desire to know.<sup>39</sup>

### **This condition is also portrayed by Indah Hanaco in her novel**

“Pernah nggak kamu bayangin beratnya harus berdiri selama berjam-jam demi melariskan sebuah produk? Belum lagi harus berdandan heboh dan selalu tampil cantik. Padahal kadang nggak ada hubungannya antara produk dengan penampilan si SPG. Intinya, perempuan hanya dijadikan pajangan. Dan itu rasanya...hmmm.... Sangat merendahkan” (*The Curse of Beauty*, 2012: 18).

“Have you Ever imagine how tiring of SPG that must stand for hours in order to popularize a product? Yet also she has to dress up and always look beautiful. While sometimes there is no relationship between the products with the appearance of the SPG. In essence, women are only used as a display. And that’s what ... hmmm .... very patronizing “( *The Curse of Beauty*, 2012: 18).<sup>40</sup>

Finally, it purposes of making women as a victim. They become the tool in distribution process and lifestyle. They are also exploited through forming and featuring the part of their body to expose the image of the product that they sell. From this point, as the icon of the product, they have to care their body to always show the good appearance of their body while they work as SPG and offer the product to the consumer, regardless they also need to consume a various beauty product. Here, they also become the object of capitalism product. In this condition, Foucault states, “body and sex are often treated as a commodity to

---

<sup>39</sup> Hidayat, S. Rahayu. 1997. *Sejarah Seksualitas: Seks dan Kekuasaan Michael Foucault* (Jakarta: Gramedia). P. 68, 168, 91.

<sup>40</sup> Hanaco, Indah. 2012. *The Curse of Beauty*. Malang: Rumah Kreasi. P. 8

satisfy the desire and get the profit".<sup>41</sup>

Islam never brings up sex. On the contrary, this religion respects it. In Al-Qur'an talks about it and directs to do<sup>42</sup>. But now, moral is released from everything politics, economic and sex. In this era, it becomes the commodity of the economy. This time is a time for the arising sexual desire. Women are exploited by men. They make them finite only from their physic and appearing. In fact, this era should be the time for them to be admitted their right. It also becomes the chance for them to develop their potency, explore their skill and appear honorable.<sup>43</sup>

This condition is also portrayed by Indah Hanaco in her novel.

"Aku selalu merasa kalau ...eh ... menjadi SPG itu agak .... Bagaimana yaa... tidak manusiawi..." (*The Curse of Beauty*, 2012: 16).

"I always feel that ... uh ... to be an SPG rather ... How yaa ... inhuman ..." (*The Curse of Beauty*, 2012: 16).<sup>44</sup>

"Bagus, kalau gitu. Aku juga kurang setuju. Profesi itu seringkali merupakan topeng".

"Topeng?" tanyaku tidak mengerti.

"Keenan mengangguk. "banyak diantara mereka yang berprofesi ganda. Yang dipromosiiin tidak hanya sebatas produk yang diwakili. Tapi yang lain juga" (*The Curse of Beauty*, 2012: 21).

Good, if so. I also disagree. The profession is often a mask ".

"Mask?" I do not understand.

"Keenan nodded. "Many of them have double professions. What is promoted is not just the product represented. But others also "( *The Curse of Beauty*, 2012: 21).<sup>45</sup>

From this piece of the story, it is told that most of SPG sometimes have a side job as a whore. From their job as SPG, they not only introduce the product but also themselves to the consumer. Sometimes they give their phone number to know each other. After that, it continues to become a personal business.

Beauvoir's argumentation is a critic to body exploitation which becomes very large in globalization era. Global capitalism era makes women do not have their own body. They are forced finely to dress up as capitalists want. Beauty

---

<sup>41</sup> Ampy Kali, *Diskursus Seksualitas Michel Foucault*, (Maumere: Ledalero, 2013), p. 140.

<sup>42</sup> See QS. Al-Baqoroh: 187

<sup>43</sup> Shihab, Quraish. 2011. *Perempuan*. (Tangerang: Lentera Hati). P. 440.

<sup>44</sup> Hanaco, Indah. 2012. *The Curse of Beauty*. (Malang: Rumah Kreasi). P. 16

<sup>45</sup> Hanaco, Indah. 2012. *The Curse of Beauty*. (Malang: Rumah Kreasi). p. 21



product becomes opium for them. This phenomenon can happen because they have become a part of the addictive economic system. Sumrahadi said that addictive economy is a Principle of an individual who likes consumption more than production until they are addicted.<sup>46</sup>

Every individual who is addicted is easy to be seduced. Seduction is a part of the production system. According to Sumrahadi seduction problem always duplicates the new ways to get mutualism. He also illuminates SPG (*Sales Promotion Girls*)'s consolation method.<sup>47</sup> They are the backbone of *marketing's* division in every company to attract the consumer. They have been tried especially to know the sensual potency of their body. Sexy clothes should be worn to communicate the body and themselves as consolation work method. This phenomenon shows that consumption does not only talk about the product but also desire.

From this paper can be found women life is still not easy. Even the freedom of doing everything is proclaimed in everywhere since many years ago, they still in the same places. They are not free to do what they want. Their movement is still restricted. Although Islam also has watched over them using Dalil Naqli or Aqli (Al-Qur'an and Hadits) their position are still weak. They are exploited and taken advantage of individual importance. Islam has taught them to have good moral by being respectful to each other, but it is impossible for reaching their awareness. Finally, it comes again to make women as the victim of their obsession. They deceive them using their beauty, then, they exploited them through their sensual body potency. They are demanded to look beautiful with a cosmetic product which will spend much money and fooled with beautiful manners that will bring them to the easy successfulness. Until they know that they are only played.

## Conclusion

All of the humans are from the same place. Because they are from the same place, therefore, they have the same purpose, duty, and right. The different of sex type does not mean that one of them can do as one pleases. This difference is for showing their role. Men have strong physic than women because they have a role to do the hard thing and keep women as the people who are lower than them. Women have weak physic because they have a role in the birth and it is

---

<sup>46</sup> Baudrillard, Jean. 2006. *Ekstasi Komunikasi*. (Yogyakarta: Kreasi Wacana),p. x

<sup>47</sup> Baudrillard, Jean. 2006. *Ekstasi Komunikasi*. (Yogyakarta: Kreasi Wacana),p. xxvi

impossible to be done if their body component is hard like men. It also means that they should not do the hard work like men. On the contrary, they have to get a proper place in society. From this responsibility, Islam comes. It comes to put them in their own place.<sup>48</sup>

If both of them have the same chance, the imbalance will never show up just like in Indah Hanaco's novel *The Curse of Beauty*. Through her literary work, she tries to describe the women oppression as the sexual object of men from their profession as SPG. Their portrayal is not different from the reality. Either in the past until now, women position is still weak and inferior. Therefore, many women writers often tell their condition through the work to express their care and sympathize with their condition. They wish through this way, it can awake them to overcome the marginalization.

## References

- Baker, Chris. 1999. *Cultural Studies*. London: SAGE publication.
- Baudrillard, Jean. 2006. *Ekstasi Komunikasi*. Yogyakarta: Kreasi Wacana.
- Bordo, Susan. "Feminism, Foucault, and the Politics of the Body". In Ramazonaglu, Caroline (ed). 1993. *Up Against Foucault: Explorations of Some Tensions Between Foucault and Feminism*. Routledge. pp. 179-202.
- Burhanuddin, Jajat & Fathurhman, Oman. 2004. *Tentang Perempuan Islam Wacana dan Gerakan*. Jakarta: Gramedia.
- D'innocenzo, Len & Cullen, Jack. 2011. *Sales Profesional*. Yogyakarta: ORYZA.
- Djoko, Sapardi Kuntowijoyo. Ashadi, Damono. Daud, Marwah Siregar Dkk. 1997. *Lifestyle Ecstasy, Kebudayaan Pop dalam Masyarakat Komoditas Indonesia*. Yogyakarta: Jalasutra.
- Hanaco, Indah. 2012. *The Curse of Beauty*. Malang: Rumah Kreasi.
- Handoko, M. Aan, Umbala, N. Fina, Suganda, R. Zulfahmie dkk. 2013. *Identitas Perempuan dalam Majalah*. Yogyakarta: UII Press.
- Hidayat, S. Rahayu. 1997. *Sejarah Seksualitas: Seks dan Kekuasaan Michael Foucault*. Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Hollows, Joanne. 2000. *Feminisme, Feminitas dan Budaya Populer*. Yogyakarta: Jalasutra.
- Kali, Ampy. 2013. *Diskursus Seksualitas Michael Foucault*. Yogyakarta: Solusi Offset.

---

<sup>48</sup> (Q.S. al-Hujurot:13)

- Michel, Foucault. 1978. *The History of Sexuality*. New York; Pantheon Books.
- Mizan. 1997. *Life Ectasy, Kebudayaan Pop dalam Masyarakat Komoditas Indonesia*. Yogyakarta: Jalasutra.
- Munti, Batara Ratna. 2005. *Demokrasi Keintiman Seksualitas di Era Global*. Yogyakarta: LKIS
- Piliang, Yasraf Amir. 2003. *Hipersemiotika, Tafsir Cultural Studies Atas Matinya Makna*. Yogyakarta: Jalasutra.
- Pranoto, Naming. 2010. *Her Story: Sejarah Perjalanan Payudara*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius.
- Prabasmoro, Aquarini Priyatno. 2007. *Kajian Budaya, Feminis Tubuh, Sastra, dan Budaya Pop*. Yogyakarta: Jalasutra.
- Rahardjo, M. Dawam. 2002. *Islam dan Transformasi Budaya*. Yogyakarta: PT. Dana Bakti Prima Yasa.
- Ritzer, George. 2004. *Masyarakat Konsumsi*. Yogyakarta: Kreasi Wacana.
- Roger, F. Mary. 2009. *Barbie Culture, Ikon Budaya Konsumerisme*. Yogyakarta: Relief.
- Ropi, I. Jamhari. 2003. *Citra Perempuan dalam Islam*. Jakarta: Gramedia.
- S. Melliana Annastasia. 2006. *Menjelajahi Tubuh Perempuan dan Mitos Kecantikan*. Yogyakarta: LKIS
- Santoso, Anang. 2009. *Bahasa Perempuan Sebuah Ideology Perjuangan*. Jakarta: Bumi Aksara.
- Shihab, Quraish. 2011. *Perempuan*. Tangerang: Lentera Hati.
- Susanto, Budi. 1992. *Citra Wanita dan Kekuasaan (Jawa)*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius.

