

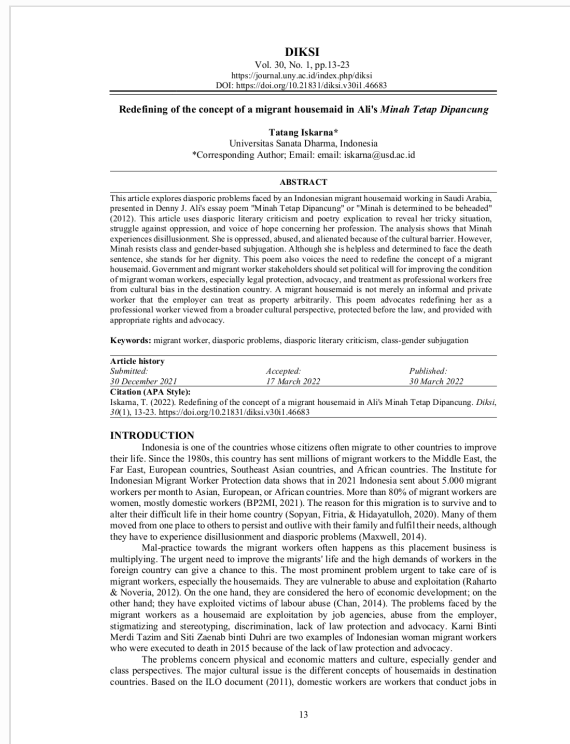


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# Redefining of the concept of a migrant housemaid in Ali's Minah Tetap Dipancung

*by Iskarna Tatang*

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**Redefining of the concept of a migrant housemaid in Ali's *Minah Tetap Dipancung*****Tatang Iskarna\***

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**ABSTRACT**

This article explores diasporic problems faced by an Indonesian migrant housemaid working in Saudi Arabia, presented in Denny J. Ali's essay poem "Minah Tetap Dipancung" or "Minah is determined to be beheaded" (2012). This article uses diasporic literary criticism and poetry explication to reveal her tricky situation, struggle against oppression, and voice of hope concerning her profession. The analysis shows that Minah experiences disillusionment. She is oppressed, abused, and alienated because of the cultural barrier. However, Minah resists class and gender-based subjugation. Although she is helpless and determined to face the death sentence, she stands for her dignity. This poem also voices the need to redefine the concept of a migrant housemaid. Government and migrant worker stakeholders should set political will for improving the condition of migrant woman workers, especially legal protection, advocacy, and treatment as professional workers free from cultural bias in the destination country. A migrant housemaid is not merely an informal and private worker that the employer can treat as property arbitrarily. This poem advocates redefining her as a professional worker viewed from a broader cultural perspective, protected before the law, and provided with appropriate rights and advocacy.

**Keywords:** migrant worker, diasporic problems, diasporic literary criticism, class-gender subjugation**Article history**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Indonesia is one of the countries whose citizens often migrate to other countries to improve their life. Since the 1980s, this country has sent millions of migrant workers to the Middle East, the Far East, European countries, Southeast Asian countries, and African countries. The Institute for Indonesian Migrant Worker Protection data shows that in 2021 Indonesia sent about 5.000 migrant workers per month to Asian, European, or African countries. More than 80% of migrant workers are women, mostly domestic workers (BP2MI, 2021). The reason for this migration is to survive and to alter their difficult life in their home country (Sopyan, Fitria, & Hidayatulloh, 2020). Many of them moved from one place to others to persist and outlive with their family and fulfil their needs, although they have to experience disillusionment and diasporic problems (Maxwell, 2014).

Mal-practice towards the migrant workers often happens as this placement business is multiplying. The urgent need to improve the migrants' life and the high demands of workers in the foreign country can give a chance to this. The most prominent problem urgent to take care of is migrant workers, especially the housemaids. They are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation (Raharto & Noveria, 2012). On the one hand, they are considered the hero of economic development; on the other hand, they have exploited victims of labour abuse (Chan, 2014). The problems faced by the migrant workers as a housemaid are exploitation by job agencies, abuse from the employer, stigmatizing and stereotyping, discrimination, lack of law protection and advocacy. Karni Binti Merdi Tazim and Siti Zaenab binti Duhri are two examples of Indonesian woman migrant workers who were executed to death in 2015 because of the lack of law protection and advocacy.

The problems concern physical and economic matters and culture, especially gender and class perspectives. The major cultural issue is the different concepts of housemaids in destination countries. Based on the ILO document (2011), domestic workers are workers that conduct jobs in

private households, such as cleaning, cooking, washing, ironing, taking care of children or elderly or sick members of the family, gardening, guarding, driving, or taking care of pets (ILO, 2022). Professional relation is set between the two parties, worker and employer. However, in Saudi Arabia, domestic workers, especially from other countries, are viewed differently, in the way that the culture of servitude in Saudi Arabia still becomes the national structure. This phenomenon is similar to modern slavery as migrant workers experienced a threat, violence, personal domination, coercion, isolation, racism, abuse, exploitation (Puspitasari, 2021). In the Hongkong context, migrant workers can sometimes become members of the family, which metaphorically means coercive relation (Constable, 2019). Research on the lives and working circumstances of female migrant domestic workers in the Gulf states, including Saudi Arabia, showed that they lived and worked in an atmosphere comparable to that of slavery (Tal, 2015). So, a legal effort of protection is urgently needed to solve the problem (Nuraeny, 2017).

The mobility experience of migrant workers inspires writers to articulate their views in literary works (Hanscom, 2019). The story of migrant workers inspires writers to express their feeling (Cuban & Fowler, 2012). Social and cultural conditions, especially movements in the society, will give influence to writers in creating poems (Padmanugraha, 2007), and the condition of oppression, discrimination, slavery, subordination and its dynamics of struggle generate some writers to express their feeling (Amalia, 2021). The problem of woman migrant workers has become the concern of woman advocacy activists and some literary writers. One of them is Denny J. Ali, a social researcher, and poet who has expressed his empathy to Indonesian woman migrant workers. This empathy deserves to go to these migrant workers, especially housemaids, as they have been victims of injustice, exploitation, discrimination, and abuse. He expressed it through his essay poem entitled "*Minah Tetap Dipancung*" or "*Minah is determined to be beheaded*". This poem is one of the essay poems published in a poetry anthology of *Atas Nama Cinta* (Ali, 2012a).

An essay poem is written and based on specific facts and expressed in a communicative language that is easy to understand. This poem distinguishes itself from the lyrical poem often written based on imagination and using symbols and metaphors, which sometimes are difficult to understand. Although the essay poem derives from factual events, it is still fictional. The facts are only used as the background frame for the writer to build their narration. An essay poem writer should conduct deep and profound research on the topic they will write, so they need data, statistics, and references to position the problem discussed. This poem sometimes is provided with footnotes to confirm that the topic is the concrete social reality or historical fact (Ali, 2012b). This kind of poem can be classified as a narrative or prose poem which highlights the intellectual aspects (Effendi, 2000). Besides, a poem can be related to other science, fields of life, and other changes in human civilization as it can be used as therapy for society (Fatimah, Ngatmini, & Kurniawan, 2021).

"*Minah Tetap Dipancung*" is based on the writer's research of the life of Indonesian woman migrant workers in Saudi Arabia. It is divided into eleven parts and attached with nine footnotes. Some reviews have been highlighted in this essay poem. This poem can be viewed from the perspective of social discrimination against migrant workers using sociological, literary theory (Septiadi, 2017). This poem exposes two opposites of woman migrant worker life, her miserable oppressed life in Saudi Arabia and her beautiful family life in her hometown, and the main character's spiritual question of how misery can happen to the one who leads a right and religious life (Rahmadi, 2021).

This article discusses the poem from the perspective of the diaspora phenomenon. It is perceived as the mobility of a woman migrant worker from one country to another because of some problems in her hometown to change her destiny and who realizes her disillusionment about the destination country. This article, firstly, highlights the issues faced by the woman migrant workers in her diasporic experience starting from the sending countries Indonesia. In the receiving country, that is Saudi Arabia. Secondly, it describes how the woman character of Minah as a housemaid struggles against the gender and class subjugation-based cultural bias. The voice of the need to redefine the concept of migrant housemaids as professional workers free from cultural bias and provided with legal protection and advocacy is the third discussion. This literary research is worth conducting since many Indonesian migrant housemaids experienced abuse, exploitation, alienation,

and discrimination in the destination countries in the way that the perception of migrant housemaids as property, exploited object, or vulnerable unskilled and uneducated worker still pervades employment, migrant worker agency, or some societies.

The concept of diaspora here does not refer to the classic meaning as experienced by Greek, Armenian, or Jewish people but to a broader perspective in the way how politically-oppressed refugees, residents from foreign countries, migrant workers, immigrants, expellees, ethnic or racial minorities live outside of the territory to which they are historically rooted (Kafle, 2010). This criticism tries to identify some diasporic problems encountered by the migrants, such as still retaining the collective memory of myth and history in the homeland, is not entirely accepted by the host country (Safran, 2011), or having a complicated relationship with the communities of the destination country (Cohen, 2008). The inquiry also includes how migrant workers face many challenges, including modern slavery, social discrimination, contract violations, sexual abuse and exploitation, and unsafe working conditions (Noredam & Agyemang, 2019).

Migration took place because there was high demand on workers, employee recruitment, and the institution which manages it to fulfil the structure of economic and the imbalance of economic and political power distribution. Castles and Millers then suggest a social capital theory, asserting that international migration will develop in such a rapid and vast way that it becomes a global network, and most people can do it quickly (Castles, Haas, & Miller, 2014). There were three main supporting theories for migration. The first is the human capital theory. Migration is a rational way to utilize human beings as investment products, for example, their education, skills, or health. Human beings will seek to maximize themselves to actualize their capacities. One of them is through doing jobs in foreign countries. The second is a structural theory. This theory is concerned with dual labour markets under capitalism. Specific jobs in migration provide financial security, while others are usually temporary, low-waged, and uncomfortable relating to three-D (dangerous, dirty, and difficult). The third is the migrant network. It is a kind of system in which the capital flow can be combined with political and cultural influence (Sukamdi, 2007).

The old and everlasting theory of migration has been pronounced by some scholars. People migrate to other countries for some reasons, such as fewer wages, lack of job opportunities, low social access in their own country and competitive salary and high job opportunity in the destination country (Lee, 1966). Migration in some cases is caused by the low access of families and other cultural units to modern markets. Migration will proceed from time to time as long as people need access to the modern markets (Stark & Bloom, 1985). People migrate to other countries to find their economic luck because of the gap of salary amount between that in their own country and the destination-of-migration country (Massey, 2019). International migration is a rational decision to solve the problems of unemployment in the sending countries and to fulfil the demands of migrant workers in the receiving countries. The sending countries will receive remittance, while the receiving countries will gain low-waged workers (Young, 1984).

"*Minah Tetap Dipancang*" also highlights the phenomenon of modern diaspora, not as a collective trauma and brutal experience like Jewish people but as a response toward territorial boundary as the identification in the context of deterritorialization and transnationalism. In this context, people construct "home away from home" (Clifford, 1997). Diaspora deals with some issues. First, people usually keep possession of memory and vision of their homeland. Second, people experience traumatic experiences in the new region. Third, they cannot be fully accepted by the inhabitants of the new environment. Fourth, the new region, considered as a fantasy fulfilling the migrant's dreams to transform identity and fortune, is also a place for banishment, discrimination, exploitation, oppression, and social disgrace. It is such disillusionment (Cohen, 2008). People encounter a dynamic tension between living here and remembering there, the origin place, and the residence (Boehmer, 2005).

## METHOD

The essay poem of "*Minah Tetap Dipancang*" is approached from the perspective of diaspora literary criticism. This criticism highlights the various types of diaspora as the object of inquiry through the framework of the experience of communities facing displacement (Mishra, 2006).



The explication method is used to disclose the meaning of the poem. The explication method means a close analysis of a text to determine the poem's meaning (Murfin & Ray, 2003). It is an attempt to reveal the significance of text by paying attention to the elements of the literary works, such as characters, conflicts, plot, setting, mood, imagery, tone, or theme (Mikics, 2007). All elements of the structure are connected to make up the meaning of the poem. So, the first step is close reading. The next step is determining the parties represented by the characters. From the characters' dialogue, thoughts, or actions, it can be identified the conflict leading to the peak and solution. The setting of society and culture are also important to support the poem's significance. Besides, mood or atmosphere and tone or writer's attitude can be additional information to determine the importance of the poem.

All the steps will be used to determine the problems the woman migrant worker has to encounter in her diasporic experience, both in Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. The analysis will also disclose how Minah struggles against cultural discrimination. The deeper meaning will be revealed from the root of the problems this diasporic experience, that is how people from various cultural background perceive and define migrant housemaid. This perception, this essay poem advocates, should be redefined.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

"*Minah Tetap Dipancang*" (2012) is an essay poem telling about the diasporic experience of an Indonesian housemaid who worked in Saudi Arabia from the first-person point of view. She was sentenced to death because she was accused of murdering her male employer. She defended herself against the sexual abuse of the employer. The court finally decided that she had to be beheaded. From the beginning till the end, the poem is pervaded by a gloomy atmosphere. It tells about the hard struggle of a low-class member of a Javanese family headed by a jobless husband to survive their life by letting the wife go to a foreign country to make a living. During the deployment process in her home country, she had to experience exploitation economically.

In the destination country, Saudi Arabia, she encounters disillusionment. She found gaps between what she imagined in her home country about the success of migrant workers in Saudi Arabia and the hard reality she had to embrace. The tone saturating the poem is full of empathy and respect to the victim, in the way that a woman who is culturally and physically weak had to resist against something more significant than she was, which are violence, abuse, exploitation, even alienation. Behind the poem, there are some crucial events, conflicts, dialogues, and descriptions of characters deserving to be contemplated as the message of the whole discourse, that is to redefine what is perceived and meant by migrant housemaids within Arabian context. The poem reveals how the perception of migrant housemaids should be switched. The following table may help the revelation of the poem on this switching paradigm.

Table 1 Aspects of migrant housemaid

Aspects of a migrant housemaid	Previous perception	The poem's proposed redefinition
Business relation with the broker	Exploited object	Partner
Position in the employer's house	Property	Professional worker
Professional treatment	Oppressive, abusive	Fair, humane
Position before the law	Vulnerable, unsupported	Protected, advocated
Social and economic rights	Ignored	Guaranteed
Cultural relation with inhabitants	Full of bias and discriminated	Objective and respected
Social interaction	Alienated	Accepted

The above finding is based on the problems the migrant housemaid encounters in the sending and destination countries. The following are the identification of the poetical content to understand the poem's significance. They are the exploitation in the homeland, the cultural and physical

oppression in the destination country, her resistance against the subjugation, and the significance of what implies in the poem.

## Discussion

### *Problems in the Homeland*

Migration experienced by Minah, the Indonesian woman migrant worker in this poem, especially housemaids, is not without reason. Economic factor becomes the driving force for women to work abroad as proposed by Lee (1966), Stark & Bloom (1985), and Massey (2009). This factor brings about a domino effect to other social behavior. Part 2 stanza 2, 7, and 10 of the essay poem "*Minah Tetap Dipancung*" shows the problems in the homeland, especially in Indonesia Minah's plan to work as a migrant housemaid is enforced by the fact that her husband is unemployed for a long time. Her husband can be unskilled or uneducated so it is difficult for him to find a job. It can be also possible that in the hometown there is no opportunity or job vacancy which can be provided for her husband:

*My husband has been unemployed for a long time* (Part 2, stanza 2).

The other problem is her prospective education of her daughter. Minah is not been able to pay the tuition fee of her eight-year-old daughter. She is not allowed to come to class because she has not paid the monthly or semester fee for her education. This line also indicates that in her hometown going to school is not free of charge. Social welfare in her residents is another problem.

Minah realizes that to keep on living costs much. She has to feed her daughter. Life is not free of charge. To persist in outliving means to provide money to pay the living cost. If she does not have a job or her husband has no work to do to pay for their life, the family will not exist. As a human being, Minah has determined to live in better conditions. She will struggle for it because she deserves a better standard of living. Her determined goal in her life to make a better living shows that she is striving hard to cope with her life as proposed by Stark and Bloom (1985).

From the sociological perspective, Minah and her husband are not ready to start building a family. Her marriage does not come with the facility and financial preparation. That's what often happens in her hometown and some parts of Indonesian regions. Marriage can be duty or social construction so that society respects those who have married. It is a kind of social status though they are not ready to raise children and pay the cost of living.

The other problem Minah has to face is the financial exploitation by the migrant worker agency. Minah has to pay some money to some persons who help her to get the job. Minah has spent four million Rupiahs to pay the cost of training, health checks up, fee for the last preparation, and insurance. However, the broker asks additional fee for the process (Part 2, stanza 7). Minah accuses the broker of corrupting and cheating for the migrant worker placement. However, the broker told her that he only takes little money. The boss in the bureaucracy is the one who corrupts, which is a common problem in Indonesia (Part 2, stanza 10). Almost all affairs, including migrant worker placement, involve corruption and exploitation as stated by Noredam.

### *Problems in the New Land*

The problems in the new land come from the employer, the society, the system of legal law, and also the different cultures. Minah tries hard to adapt to the new environment. She tries to follow all rules imposed on her and to work various jobs as scheduled and assigned to her. The problem in the new land comes first from the other migrant workers who have stayed in Saudi Arabia for a long time. They do not pick her up at the airport or welcome her coming (Part 3, stanza 1). Entering into a new area is a problem. She has no one to talk with and share with. The sense of Indonesian identity amongst the workers is only disillusionment. She is doubted to step into the house where she will work. It is so lonely and quiet. This indicates the cold welcoming of the new region. She is far away from home, feels lonely, and has doubts about continuing her mission (Maxwell, 2014).

Minah longs for her family in Indonesia. The shadow of her husband, her daughter, and her parents haunt her. She is very sorrowful and cries as she feels alone and no one cares for her. To her surprise, the host welcomes her coldly, a strange situation in comparison with Indonesian people who

are friendly, warm, and open. The cultural difference gives her a shock as suggested by Cohen (1997) and Boehmer (2005).

The cultural problem begins to place Minah in a difficult situation when she practices what her religious teacher in her hometown, smiling and being friendly to a man. Her religious leader teaches her to be polite and how to speak and behave. That is why Minah always smiles to show her politeness and good behavior. However, her attitude is misinterpreted. He thoughts that Minah tries to flirt and seduce him. This is one thing that she will never do in her whole life as she commits to her religious teacher.

*I was taught to smile  
Unfortunately, my employer  
Misunderstood what I presented  
He thought I tempted him (Part 4, stanza 3)*

This different culture becomes the starting point of her abuse of her as identified by Safran (2011) and Cohen (2008).

Minah has little understanding of cross-cultural differences. She assumes that Indonesian and Arabian cultures are the same. She thinks that Islam teaches the same good behavior, that is, smiling can be alms. The lack of cross-cultural understanding puts Minah in trouble, especially sexual harassment. While her mistress is sleeping, her male employer comes closer to her and seduces her. Aminah begins to feel fearful. She is afraid of looking at her employer. Her openness, friendliness, and politeness are understood as the indication of her offer of a sexual affair (Part 4, stanza 6).

Minah starts to feel like longing for her homeland and her family. She feels dislocated and what she expects is not really what happens (Part 5, stanza 1). She feels tired and bored with her work. She then tries to call on her past when she is with her husband, Ahmad. She misses her husband. She regrets that she has to leave her family and hometown. Her determined goal to improve her life makes her stay away from her husband, but the traumatic experience with her employer makes her want to be with her husband as recognized by Cohen (2008) and Boehmer (2005).

Minah begins to long for her daughter as well. She is determined to go abroad to be able to pay her tuition fee. However, facing the fact that she is disillusioned with the working condition, she regrets leaving her daughter to work abroad (Part 5, stanza 3). Minah feels empty and bored in such a situation. She thinks of her cute daughter, Aisah. She regrets that she cannot feed her and buy her food.

Besides the cultural problems, Minah also encounters financial problems. She has not received her salary yet. There is no contract deal is made to arrange her work. She feels sad that she cannot transfer her salary to her family (Part 5, stanza 4).

Minah is also alienated from society. She feels like a bird in a cage. She has to keep silent. She has no one to share with. She has to stay at home and is not allowed to go out of the house (Part 5, stanza 7). This social and psychological problem faced by Minah is caused by the fact that she is isolated and withdrawn from everyday social life. Her right to normal life is limited.

The most traumatic experience as a migrant housemaid is the sexual abuse done by her employer. The reason behind the rape is not her friendly and polite behavior now but because of the different perception of the concept of the housemaid. Housemaid becomes the property of the employer, and he can do anything to what he possesses. Besides, male domination becomes the factor in the rape of Minah. Her male employer is physically stronger than she is (Part 6, stanza 3). Her body becomes the object of his sexual desire. Although Minah refuses to be treated violently, her employer forces her to have sexual intercourse (Part 6, stanza 6). However, Minah fights against his physical domination by screaming and pushing him into the wall.

Why her traumatic event happens actually because of the different perception of the concept of housemaid culturally and religiously (Part 6, stanza 7). Her employer assumes that what he has done to her is not against the religious rule. This perception of ideology has something to do with the justification of the male domination and also the concept of the housemaid as the property of the



employer, just like sub-culture slaves. Minah feels that she has lost her dignity. She refuses to be treated like a slave because she is a housemaid who works for the salary in return.

Her employer rapes her repeatedly and many times. As soon as he finishes sleeping with her, he gives Minah some money. He treats her as if she were a professional sex worker or the money is treated as the fee for satisfying his sexual desire (Part 6, stanza 11).

Minah also experiences a religious crisis. Since she was a child, she has been taught that God promises to protect her from disaster. She has a belief that God protects the oppressed, the weak, and the dominated. She protests her God because she has done all the good teachings but why she still experiences misfortune.

The following problem Minah has to handle is the treatment of her mistress when she reports and complains about what her husband has done to her to gain protection from her. However, the fact is that Minah gets physical and verbal violence from her. Her mistress misunderstands that all that happens to her is caused by her open behaviour by showing her smile and friendliness (Part 7, stanza 7). Cultural problems still pervade Minah. She is tortured, ironed, tufted, and whipped. However, her cruel treatment of her is sometimes caused by the fact that some woman migrants have the profession of a prostitute, and not all the migrant workers show good behavior.

Another prominent problem that Minah has to face is the lack of law protection for migrant workers. Minah cannot bear being raped, so she tries to fight against her employer and finally kills him with knife stabs. She is sentenced to death without any advocacy and legal protection. The diplomacy attempt from the Indonesian government is too late so that Minah must be sentenced to death by being beheaded (Part 10, stanza 1).

#### ***Housemaid's Resistance Against Class and Gender Subjugation***

As a housemaid who lives in exile, Minah suffers from a doubly-oppressed experience. She is the second class as a woman in Saudi Arabia; on the one hand, and on the other hand, she is a lower-class person and stigmatized as an uneducated and unskilled person. Minah strives to survive in two layers, the first is her class as a housemaid, and the second is her gender as a woman.

She fights against sexual harassment with her whole physical strength. She refuses to give in her dignity to agree to do sexual intercourse with her employer. When her breast was squeezed, she pushed her employer to the wall.

Minah also opposes how her employer treats her as a sex slave that can be paid. She never takes the money, even though she is tempted to send the money to her family. She considers that the money her employer gives to her is not rightful money. Refusing the money indicates her resistance against the harassment:

*I was looking at the box in which there was money he had given as soon as he raped me*

...

*I tore apart all the money in the box, piece after piece while I was crying, deeply injured*  
(Part 7, stanza 2).

When the rape is done repeatedly, she finally gives her final resistance with a knife and stabs him to defend her dignity as a human being (Part 9, stanza 3). Minah is willing to put aside her dreams of improving her living for the sake of defending her dignity as a woman and human being.

Minah also gives her resistance in the legal area. She is alone has to face the court. What is Saudi Arabia calls murder, for Minah it is a kind of defending her dignity. She advocates herself and makes her voice known and heard throughout the world (Part 10, stanza 4).

#### ***Re-Defining The Concept of the Housemaid***

Although it is constructed in a fictional narrative, the author reveals and uncovers the actual events in an essay poem. The purpose of describing the actual event using data, references, observations, and statistics is for the author to address the social issue of the environment. According to Ali (2012), the essay-poem platform includes five elements. The first is that this poem explores the author's thoughtful spiritual side in perceiving the social issues. The second is that the poem uses simple language that is easy to understand. Third, the poem's emphasis is on the moral content of the

story through the succession of facts constructed in a fictional narrative. The fourth is that the verse is not from the author's imagination but from social reality. The fifth is that this poem needs a long story with characters and the dynamic development of the story. The third is that the poem's emphasis is on the moral content of the story through the sequence of facts constructed in a fictional narrative. The fourth is that the verse is not from the author's imagination but from social reality. The fifth is that this poem needs a long story with characters and the dynamic development of the story.

"*Minah Tetap Dipancung*" describes an Indonesian migrant housemaid's sorrowful story of how she has to struggle to take part in the family affair to improve her life, how she is treated improperly as a worker with sexual harassment, violence, isolation, discrimination, and stigmatization color the poem. However, as the essay poem has moral content and advocacy toward the social problem, the writer brings the readers to a specific reflection: the concept of a housemaid, which has to be reconsidered.

Most of what Minah has to face as problems begins with the different perceptions of the migrant workers. Minah starts with the assumption that she has to strive to survive and improve her standard of living by working as a housemaid in Saudi Arabia. She is determined to do it because of the stories told by the previous successful migrant workers. They make much money and improve the standard of living of their family in the homeland. They can build a big and good house. They have a modern lifestyle as they have a lot of money to support it (Part 2, stanza 5).

Minah dreams about the success of working as a migrant housemaid. However, she is not aware of the cross-cultural understanding, so her behavior is often mistreated. She does not realize that being a migrant worker as a housemaid is perceived in various ways. In Arabian culture, the concept of the housemaid is somewhat different from what Minah imagines as it is in Indonesia, her homeland. For some Arabian people, a housemaid is still considered an enslaved person in a particular sub-culture. A housemaid can be treated as the property of her employer, whom he can possess and treat in many ways. Besides, there is a gap between Indonesian and Arabian cultures in understanding social behavior. For some brokers, processing the placement of the migrant worker becomes a profitable business for making money.

This poem encourages its readers to think about the cultural difference and urges them to propose a thoughtful solution for this complicated problem faced by Minah. The writer offers his thoughtful reflection through the notes he puts under the poem to explain the story and what the migrant worker should do and be treated.

First of all, Minah never knows that in the modern-day, a housemaid can be treated as a slave who can be abused sexually. She never imagines that this happens to her (Part 6, stanza 14). Secondly, Minah is not well-informed that not all migrant workers behave properly. Some of them want to become prostitutes. Even many of them have to deal with the police officers for their misconduct. Minah never realizes that some of the housemaids are not able to work properly, so they are not highly estimated. Minah does not understand that she has to be sentenced to death when she defends herself by stabbing her employer. "An eye for eye, a tooth for tooth" principle never crosses in her mind (Part 8, stanza 3 and Part 9, stanza 8).

Minah does not perceive that migrant worker placement in foreign countries, especially in Saudi Arabia, becomes the arena of illegal business. Migrant workers are treated as an industry that cannot be stopped and it brings about financial advantage for the brokers. The high demands of migrant workers and the low condition of unemployment and job opportunity will persist in this business (Part 10, stanza 8).

From Minah's case, there should be an improvement for such a situation. The adaptive and changing perception of the concept of a housemaid as a migrant worker should be re-formulated. A housemaid should be treated as a worker protected by law and rule with certain regular wages. Minah must be skillful in what kind of work she involves in. She must understand the cross-cultural knowledge of the foreign country so that her behavior cannot be misinterpreted. However, the people's perception of a housemaid should be culturally changed from the receiving destination country. She is not property, and she cannot be treated as possession of the employer. She is a professional who will work professionally, and her rights as a worker should be legally protected. For business management, a housemaid cannot be treated as a source of income and only a business

matter. She is a human being who strives to make a fortune and takes every risk in a new region. She must be respected and trained professionally.

## CONCLUSIONS

The essay poem "Minah Tetap Dipancang" discloses the problems around the migrant workers, especially a migrant housemaid, either in the homeland or in the destination country. These problems are caused by the cultural perception in viewing and defining who migrant housemaid is. Employers or migrant worker agents at times still perceive her as property and an object of exploitation, abuse, and discrimination. She has to bear the low social condition of unemployment in her hometown. Working abroad, she has to handle difficult situations, especially for a housemaid who has family in the homeland. She has to face the corrupting agency. She is stigmatized as a group of lower-class, uneducated, and unskilled people. She can be treated as property by the employer so that she can be sexually abused and gender-stereotyped to serve the sexual desire of her employer. She is isolated and alienated because of the language and cultural barrier. A housemaid lacks legal protection as she works inside the house without any advocacy and is far from surveillance.

However, she is determined to defend her dignity. She resists the employer's oppression and shows that she is not what he thinks in his cultural perspective. She has to pay a death sentence to keep her womanhood grandeur.

What she expects is not the same as what she imagines about the new region where she works. Traumatic experience often pervades her. There is a gap between what is called home and what is called exile. The diasporic experience becomes traumatic as she is dislocated and displaced in a new environment where culturally, she is not accepted and treated differently. Longing for the homeland will be the following problem as disillusionment comes to her.

Redefinition of a migrant housemaid should be made in the way that cultural perception on this worker. It is the time for the employer, agents, society, and government to perceive her as a business partner or a professional worker with fair and humane treatment. She should be guaranteed on her legal rights and protection before the law. She should socially be accepted and respected. Redefinition of a migrant housemaid is urgently needed in the way that she should be viewed comprehensively from a broader cultural perspective, be protected before the law, and be given appropriate advocacy. Being migrant workers across the border should be access to a better living, not a traumatic experience. This can be reached through the political will of the ones who hold authority, especially the government of the home and receiving country.

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