

THE PICTURE AND CULTURAL STRUGGLE OF THE BALINESE WOMEN IN THE NOVELS WRITTEN BY PANJI TISNA, PUTU WIJAYA, AND OKA RUSMINI

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Abstract

This study aims at revealing the picture and cultural struggle of the Balinese women in the novels written by Panji Tisna, Putu Wijaya, and Oka Rusmini, identifying the intertextuality of their works and the women's attitude towards sociopolitical discourse and the discourse of equality in gender. The texts investigated are the novels written by Panji Tisna entitled *Ni Rawit Ceti Penjual Orang* (1935) and *Sukreni Gadis Bali* (1936); the novel written by Putu Wijaya entitled *Putri* published in two books (2004); and the novels entitled by *Tarian Bumi* (2000) and *Kenanga* (2003).

The theories such as the sociological theory of literature, the theory of feminism and the theory of intertextuality were adopted for investigating the novels. The results of the study show the real situation undergone by the women such as the strong confinement of tradition, the manifestation of the situation undergone by the marginalized and subordinated women, suppression, taming (cooptation), the role as hard workers (double-burden), the role as single parents, the victims of violence and the taming process (cooptation). Based on such a real situation, the female characters in the novels showed their cultural struggle by accentuating concepts/the framework of thinking, reinterpreting and behaving towards tradition. From the intertextuality point of view, the female characters in the novels were consistent in their vision towards tradition. This was shown by implementing ideas/insights, reinterpreting and behaving towards the space in the texts. However, as far as sociopolitical discourse and the discourse of equality in gender are concerned, they behaved differently. Some compromised on sociopolitical reality and equality in gender and the others were highly reactive and tended to show struggles through their ways of thinking and behaving.

This is the only study which has investigated the novels written by Panji Tisna, Putu Wijaya and Oka Rusmini at the same time. The novelty is that there is intertextuality among the novels. Such intertextuality is in the form of thematic elements which include sociopolitical discourse and the discourse of equality in gender.

1. Introduction

Literature and its setting, sociocultural life, are two variables which are closely related. Kusuma (1990: 3) states that literary works, especially novels, are not created from nothing; they cannot be separated from the sociocultural aspects as their background. This means that the sociocultural journey of an ethnic group can be traced back and identified from its literary works.

The investigation initially made has shown that the female characters have been provided with the central position in the novels written by the Balinese writers since the Dutch colonial era up to now. They have struggled to free themselves from patriarchy, in spite of having to be faced with various sufferings, humiliations, and submissions for the sake of greater interests (Putra, 2003: 6). This study tries to investigate the picture and cultural struggle of the Balinese women described by the Balinese writers in their novels. The Balinese writers are classified based on ethnicity, without taking the religions they belong to and where they live into account. It is not possible to investigate all literary works as there are too many novels, short stories and poems which are concerned with the Balinese women and the issues related to their existence. Therefore, the only novels written by the famous Balinese writers such as Panji Tisna, Putu Wijaya and Oka Rusmini are investigated in this study. Their works have been listed as the high quality Indonesian literary ones. The other reason why they were chosen was that they belong to different generations. Whereas Panji Tisna was the writer from the era of 1930s and belongs to the Generation of New Poets (Angkatan Pujangga Baru), Putu Wijaya belongs to the Generation of 1970s and is still productive up to now, and Oka Rusmini comes from the Generation of 2000s. Her novel entitled *Tarian Bumi* (2000) has been widely welcomed because of its interesting theme and quality. The novels written by the above-mentioned writers were particularly chosen as they present the female characters and the matters related to gender. Based on this consideration, two novels written by Panji Tisna entitled *Ni Rawit Ceti Penjual Orang* (1935) and *Sukreni Gadis Bali* (1936) were chosen. The Putu Wijaya's works which were chosen are *Putri I* and *Putri II* (2004). And the Oka Rusmini's works which were chosen are *Tarian Bumi* (2000) and *Kenanga* (2003).

In general, this study aims at revealing the picture and the cultural struggle of the women and the intertextuality among the novels written by Panji Tisna, Putu Wijaya

and Oka Rusmini. It also aims at revealing the reactions of the female characters towards the sociopolitical discourse and the discourse of equality in gender.

The sociological theory of literature, which is particularly concerned with the relationship among the writers, literary texts and sociocultural aspects, is adopted in this study. Comprehension was made through the literary work totality with the societal aspects contained in it and through its relationship with the community backgrounding it. Ratna (2003: 3) states that the relationship between literature and its community is dialectical in nature and attempts to find out the interdependence quality between literature and the community. The role of a writer as the real creator appeared after the 18th century with an assumption that human beings were the autonomous creators. The highest level took place in the 19th century, that is, during the Romantic era, when the writers' individualities were shown off with their famous lyrical poems.

As far as literature and reality are concerned, Goldmann (1977: 9) states that literature is not only the reflection of reality which tends to be the collective awareness, but is also the culmination of coherence of various tendencies towards the awareness of a particular group. Pratt (1977: 49) has tried to give the basis for literary communication involving the reader and the text. Using the context as the basis, Pratt states that the important convention applicable to the literary communication is that the reader has accepted him/herself as the audience when giving response to any literary message. The discussion concerning the relationship between literature and its readers usually refers to the literary concepts as social expressions. Wellek and Warren (1990: 95) would be pessimistic about this axiom, if the above expression meant that literature reflected the sociocultural situation in a particular period of time. A writer, as part of the community, has limitations on giving reactions towards the social phenomenon he/she is faced with. He/she has limitations on expressing his/her life entirely or the life in a particular era concretely and entirely.

Hoggart (1966: 226) claims that literature plays a strategic role in developing the feeling and emergency of life.

The theory of feminism pays attention to the women's representation in the literary world. Its existence presents the marginalization of the women's literary works or the marginalization of the women's representation in literature. It focuses on (1) discussing the texts written by female writers; (2) discussing the female characters in literary works; and (3) investigating the female readers' response towards literature. In

this study, the theory of feminism is employed to investigate the female characters in literary works.

In this study, the theory of feminism is adopted as the basis for discussing the female characters. The focus is on how the female characters are presented, what their ambitions are, how their fates are, what their orientations are and how are their pictures. The logic consequence of the struggles between the writers and their sociocultural lives is responsible for the Balinese women pictured in literary works. The existence of women as part of the community should be considered a reality. Their interaction in the community is similar to their other gender interactions. Its relationship with representation is that how a reality or an object is presented.

The theory of intertextuality is employed for understanding the interrelationship of the elements of the texts discussed. Eriyanto (2005: 305) states that in general intertextuality can be mainly divided into two; manifest intertextuality and interdiscursivity. Manifest intertextuality refers to the form in which the other texts or other sounds appear explicitly in the text. In the manifest intertextuality, the other texts explicitly appear in the text, for example, in the form of quotation. It includes discourse representation, negation, irony and metadiscourse. The discourse representation refers to how an event is reported.

In the interdiscursivity, the other texts serve as the configuration of different elements. The series of intertextuality refers to how texts mutually use one another and how one element is inserted in another. It is here, in which the writer uses the texts outside him/her and presents them between his/her sound and the objective intended to be achieved, that the dialogic atmosphere takes place.

2. The Results and Discussion

2.1. The Picture and Women's Struggle in the Novel

In *Ni Rawit Ceti Penjual Orang*, abbreviated to NRCP (1935), the novel written by Panji Tisna, Ida Ayu Kendran and Ni Anis are pictured as the protagonist characters, and Ni Rawit is pictured as the antagonist character. Ida Ayu Kendran is described as a Brahmin woman with a good moral, who obeys custom and tradition, likes arts and shows good conducts when associating with other people both within the *griya* community (*geriya* refers to a residence where the priest and his/her family resides) and

outside it. Ni Anis is described as a woman belonging to the *sudra* traditional social strata (caste) who works as a servant at the *geriya*, strongly maintains her ideas and likes traditional arts. Ni Rawit is described as a woman who is not loyal, tricky and materialistic. Everything is materially measured. She is also described as a woman who does not keep her ideas and always does bad things (achubakarma).

In *Sukreni Gadis Bali*, abbreviated to SGB (1936), the other novel written by Panji Tisna, Ni Luh Sukreni is pictured as a protagonist female character and I Negari and Men Negara are pictured as the antagonist characters. Sukreni is described as a young Balinese talented beautiful woman who is polite, respects other people and is loyal. She is also described as a woman who submits herself to fate and believes in *hukum karma* (the law of cause and effect) known as *karma phala*. I Negari is described as a young beautiful woman who is so close to her mother that she always does what she is supposed to do. She is also described as a woman who has the capacity to use strategies when facing other people who bring benefits for herself, although such strategies are the implementation of bad things (achubakarma). Men Negara represents the Balinese women who are not loyal and not kind. She is pictured as a bad mother as she does not feel guilty when leaving her husband to marry another man. She does not feel guilty when she leaves her only daughter named Luh Widi whom is later called Luh Sukreni. She is described as such a materialistic mother that she does not feel guilty when she works together with her daughter, I Negari, and I Gusti Made Tusan, another character, to trap Sukreni in such a way that she is sexually abused.

In *Putri*, both in book I and II, the novel written by Putu Wijaya (2004), the central character *Putri* plays a role as the protagonist character. She is described as a beautiful woman who used to a servant at Puncak Tabanan Palace. She is pictured as an educated young woman with an academic degree in literature (*sarjana sastra*) and changeable professions such as a junior lecturer, a shop assistant working at a shop selling books, as a teacher as well as a successful entrepreneur who sells T-shirts with the trade mark of *Suksema*. Finally, she works as the manager of *Mahakarya* project. She has a strong vision when giving response to tradition. In the novel her views on tradition are revealed. Furthermore, her insights have been written in a book entitled *Tradisi Baru* published by Nelly.

In *Tarian Bumi* (2000) and *Kenanga* (2003), the novels written by Oka Rusmini, the descriptions of several women are presented. *Telaga* is described as the central

character with protagonist role. She is described as a Brahmin lady whose former name was Ida Ayu Telaga Pidada. As she is married to someone coming from the *sudra* traditional social stratification (caste) named Wayan Sasmita. Such a marriage is called *nyerod*; and as a consequence, she is treated as someone coming from the *sudra* traditional social stratification (lower caste). In addition to being brave in fighting against the tradition applicable at her former community of *gerya* (a particular residence where a Brahmin priest and his/her family resides), she is also visionary as far as the tradition in her environment is concerned. In *Kananga*, the other novel written by Oka Rusmini, a Brahmin beautiful woman named Ida Ayu Kenanga is described as a Brahmin beautiful lady working as a lecturer at a university. She is described as a Balinese woman who likes doing things voluntarily for others. She does not mind doing anything for her younger sister named Ida Ayu Cempaka. As a result, she is sexually violated by Ida Bagus Bhuana, a man who was expected to marry Cempaka, her sister. This sexual violation leads to the birth of a baby named Ayu Intan Prameswari.

The cultural struggle performed by the Balinese women in the novel NRCPO is related to the monolithic view with the patriarchal system, a Balinese traditional and religious system framed with Hinduism, as the emphasis. In the religious system adhered to by the Balinese people, there is a belief that what is predestined resulting from what is done (karma) should be accepted. The bad thing done by Ni Rawit, that is, the strategy arranged to satisfy her ambition in making Ida Ayu Kendran marry Ida Wayan Ompog and in kidnapping Ni Anis to be sold as a slave, leads to her bad luck. She sank and died when there was a contact of weapons between the Dutch Ships and French ships loaded with slaves.

In the novel SGB, the cultural struggle performed by the female character, Sukreni, is that she faces her problems wisely. The struggle in the form of “doing nothing” is the implementation of receptive attitude as what is predestined by *Hyang Widi*, God the Almighty. Her suffering symbolizes the powerlessness of the Balinese women in the patriarchal system which threatens women as subordinates and men as superiors. The suffering exposed by Panji Tisna shows fighting attitude towards hegemony making women confined to domestic roles and powerlessness.

In the novel PI and PII, the female character, Putri, shows her cultural struggle by reinterpreting and being responsive towards tradition. She struggles against tradition; a ritual, for example, according to her, is performed without being based on the

substance making the ritual impractical. Her reinterpretation of tradition is poured into a book entitled *Tradisi Baru* (New Tradition), which contains an insight how tradition should humanize man and should be based on the rational substance. She also introduces an insight into how to reform the way of behaving in daily life in the middle of Hinduism-based cultural interaction. She also fights against the matters related to traditional social stratification (caste) which has been misunderstood. She appears as a different *Sudra* woman. *Sudra* is a community which is always attached to the icon of being uneducated and poor working as servants, being not familiar with ethics and having no prestige. She also struggles for equality in gender and disagrees with the women's receptive attitude. She thinks rationally and is aware that everybody has the same rights and initiatives for being proportionally equal in life. The female character in the novels PI and PII emphasizes the teaching *Karma Pala* (the law of cause and effect) thematically reflected.

Oka Rusmini, in the novels TB and K, describes the cultural struggles performed by the female characters. In the novel TB, the character Telaga is described as a beautiful woman whose former name was Ida Ayu Telaga Pidada, meaning that she used to be a brahmin woman. She is highly educated and works as a lecturer; however, as she marries a man coming from the *sudra* traditional social stratification (*nyerod*), she is not entitled to her *brahmin* degree any longer. She also struggles by reinterpreting tradition and behaving concretely in her life, as can exemplified from her braveness to leave the *gerya* community, the community where she comes from, to join the *sudra* community by marrying someone coming from outside her former community.

Kenanga is the female character in the novel K. She is described as a Brahmin woman with higher education; however, she is prepared to do things voluntarily for other people. What she has done for her younger sister, Ida Ayu Cempaka, Telaga should receive the suffering of giving birth to a baby resulting from being sexually violated by the character Bhuana. In the novel K, Oka Rusmini reveals the dark side of the *griya* life. She reveals that the old generation of the *sudra* community *tends* to get upgraded with regard to its traditional social stratification by being married to noble men. The women coming from the *sudra* traditional social stratification, if marrying noble men, will get upgraded with regard to their traditional social stratification. Then their rights and obligations will differ from those obtained when they belong to the

sudra traditional social stratification. The marginalization of the *sudra* roles is resisted by Telaga. In the novel TB, Oka Rusmini, through the character Intan, shows a different *sudra* character defeating the roles and existence of Brahmin women.

2.2 The Intertextuality among the Works Written by Panji Tisna, Putu Wijaya and Oka Rusmini

The intertextuality among the works written by Panji Tisna, Putu Wijaya and Oka Rusmini can be described as follows. The female characters in the three literary works show a strong interrelation in reinterpreting tradition and struggling for an ideal situation in which the societal life is not avoided from developing. The female characters in the three literary works reinterpret the community roles considered the symbol of establishment, the sources of ethics and morality such as *puri* (palace) and *geriya*. They significantly emphasize the teaching of *karma phala* which serves as the reference referred to by the Balinese people in their real lives. The struggle for equality in gender serves as the material reflected by the female characters making holistically the texts in the position of interpreting and reacting against the existing social phenomenon. The appearance of new *sudra* personalities shows the female characters' disagreement with the social stratification in the Balinese community which is not based on the substance of performance, but on inheritance and marriage tie.

2.3 The Female Characters' Reaction against Sociopolitical Discourse and the Discourse of Equality in Gender

The reaction of the female characters in the novels written by the three writers against the sociopolitical discourse and equality in gender can be described as follows. The female characters in the novels written by Panji Tisna are not repressive against but tolerant of the sociopolitical discourse, meaning that the cultural struggle is indirectly performed. The receptive attitude of Sukreni who suffers from being sexually violated by the character I Gusti Made Tusan is not shown as how women are sexually abused but as the substance of bearing witness against the women who are cruelly treated which then make others (the readers) sympathetic to them. The strong belief of Panji Tisna in the teaching of *Kama Pala* (the law of cause and effect) strengthens his attitude not to openly show the female characters' resistance. Tradition is not much reinterpreted

as far as the discourse developing among the female intellectuals who move through the movement of *Putri Sadar* are concerned. In the level of political discourse, the kingdom government is reflected in the colonial government.

The character *Putri*, in the novels written by Putu Wijaya, is highly reactionary in giving response to the social discourse. It extremely shows the impression that she resists the tradition which does not refer to the substance. Putu Wijaya, when interviewed, stated that his female characters were not reactionary but were highly different from the other characters in Bali. She resists the tradition and gives her views on a new one. Her resistance to the hegemony results from the social stratification system. The basis for the teaching of *karma phala* is also reflected by Putu Wijaya in organizing the life journeys of the characters. Politically, he gives his views on what Independent Bali is like and as far as equality in gender is concerned, Putri has struggled maximally.

In the novels TB and K, the female characters sometimes get indecisive when reading tradition. As far as the behavior of *nyerod* (getting married to someone coming from lower social stratification), the female characters seem to be indecisive. First they are doubtful and believe that *nyerod* will lead those who do it to suffer from negative effects such as being supposed not to respect their ancestors. As a result, it is believed that bad things will happen to them. Second, Oka Rusmini shows her firm attitude in resisting tradition (as shown by the writer in her real life by marrying a man from *sudra* tradition social stratification). In addition to *nyerod*, she has also converted her religion as a result of marrying someone belonging to another religion. In the novel, the character Ida Ayu Telaga Pidada shows her firmness by bravely leaving her noble degree and *geriya* community by marrying a man coming from the *sudra* social stratification (caste). Oka Rusmini, in her novel, also resists the difference in status which subordinates the community of *sudra*. In this novel, thematically she also shows another character coming from the *sudra* social stratification who is educated, visionary, dynamic, rational and has prestige and does not work as a servant. As far as the discourse of equality in gender is concerned, the female characters in the novels written by Oka Rusmini such as Kenanga, Telaga and Intan show their optimal struggle.

3. Closing

In the novel NRCPO written by Panji Tisna (1935, as Balinese women, Ida Ayu Kendran and Ni Anis are described as the protagonist characters and Ni Rawit is described as an antagonist character. In the novel SGB (1936), Luh Sukreni is described as a protagonist character and I Negari and Men Negara are described as antagonist characters.

In the novel P written by Putu Wijaya (2004), published as the first and second books, Putri is described as a protagonist character. In the novels TB (2000) and K (2003), Oka Rusmini presents several women. Whereas Telaga, as the central character in the novel TB, is a protagonist one, in the novel K a beautiful brahmin woman who is educated, university graduate and works as a lecturer at a university, Ida Ayu Kenangan, is described as the protagonist character. The female characters in the novels written by the three writers, Panji Tisna, Putu Wijaya and Oka Rusmini, show the women's real condition manifested in the forms of being marginalized, being subordinate, being oppressed and labeled, being hard workers (double-burden), being single parents, being the victims of violence, and being domesticated (cooptation).

The cultural struggle performed by the Balinese women in the novels written by Panji Tisna, Putu Wijaya and Oka Rusmini shows the one which is related to the monolithic opinion emphasizing the patriarchal societal system, the religious and traditional system of the Balinese people framed with Hinduism. The female characters in the novels perform their cultural struggles by reinterpreting and behaving towards and resisting the tradition which is not based on the substance but on the impractical ceremonies. They also show their views on reforming the way of behaving in daily life in the middle of Hinduism-based cultural interaction. There is a resistance to the matters related to traditional social stratification (caste) which should have been based on professions (warna). The female characters emphasize the teaching of *karma phala* as thematically reflected from the novels.