

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

Bali is a province in Indonesia that stands out for its distinct nature and culture, shaped not only by social structures but also by the predominant Hinduism followed by most Balinese people (Covarrubias, 2015). The customs of Bali are inspiring and have been celebrated for their beauty and uniqueness for centuries. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that gender inequality has been a persistent issue throughout the history of Balinese culture. Balinese cultural traditions have endorsed the patriarchal idea that men are superior to women, which has led to the marginalization of women to a subordinate status. The process of the Balinese woman being relegated to a secondary status commenced with her exclusion from economic participation in the traditional values system. This caused the woman to remain in the position of a dependent and powerless figure, a situation that is defined as gender inequality.

The effect of gender inequality in Bali is detrimental to the overall socio-economic and political development of Balinese women. This is mainly due to the limited access to education and professional opportunities that Balinese women experience. As a result, Balinese women are denied the chance to gain the skills, knowledge, and experience necessary for economic advancement in today's world, making any career progression difficult.

Moreover, the traditional Balinese culture often facilitates decisions about land ownership and inheritance that are made without the input of Balinese women, thereby limiting their access to important resources necessary for economic security and independence. Furthermore, religion and mythological stories taught in Balinese culture to young generations continue to foster the idea of inequality between men and women, leading to an ingrained gender bias in decisions about roles and resources. The numerous social and cultural forces opposing full gender

equality among Balinese women and the difficulty of enacting more equal opportunities and responsibilities prevent a diverse range of economic, social, and political opportunities from being realized. The long-term consequences of this inequality are manifested in the form of poverty and poor education and health outcomes among Balinese women.

Feminists respond to patriarchy forces in various ways, one of which is by writing. One of the present-day writers who raises the theme of patriarchy in her writing is Oka Rusmini. Oka Rusmini, a female writer of Balinese origin, is one of many writers who addresses the topic of patriarchy in her works. Born on July 11, 1967, in Jakarta, she uses her writing as a platform to express her views on this issue. She devoted herself to writing and produced works that received wide acclaim in anthologies, journals, and magazines. She writes with a desire to document Indonesian culture. She thinks Indonesia has a multitude of cultures, especially in Bali. There are many aspects of Indonesian culture that she could investigate, which would be a shame to leave undocumented. She thinks it will be boring if she writes about Indonesian culture in theoretical books. But in fiction, she thinks the readers will find it more appealing. That is her desire to take part in documenting Indonesian culture.

Following her study and long stay in Bali, she recognized that Indonesia indeed has some truly valuable culture that readers really need to know. She finally decided to focus on being a novelist. She will write a novel about culture that readers will love. Culture does not imply that there are old practices that are useful for modern Indonesians. For example, the long-forgotten Balinese culture can be applied in the context of modern society in Indonesia.

She has written several novels related to Balinese culture, which have been recognized with numerous awards. One of her novels, *Tarian Bumi*, was awarded the literary achievement award by the Center for Documentation of Language of the Indonesian Department of Education in 2003. *Tarian Bumi* is a contemporary novel about the experiences of women and can be interpreted through a feminist lens. The book describes the patriarchal forces presents in Balinese culture, which have influenced and defined the lives of Balinese women. *Tarian Bumi* was first

published in 2000 by Indonesia Tera in Magelang, Indonesia, and later translated into English by Rani Amboyo and Thomas M. Hunter. The English version was published in 2011 by The Lontar Foundation under the title *Earth Dance*.

The novel *Earth Dance* is a translated work that chronicles the experiences of four generations of Balinese women within a single family, highlighting the various difficulties they encounter. The protagonist of the story is a 30-year-old woman called Ida Ayu Telaga Pidada or Telaga, who is a noblewoman of the highest caste in the *griya* and her neighborhood. The narrative of the novel primarily focuses on the conflicts that arise between Telaga's personal desires and the demands of her caste. The novel also describes the harsh realities faced by Telaga due to the patrilineal and caste systems prevalent in Balinese culture. The book features other main characters, including Ida Ayu Sagra Pidada, Ida Bagus Tugur, Ida Bagus Ngurah Pidada, Luh Sekar (Jero Kenanga), Wayan Sasmitha, and Luh Sari, while the supporting characters include Luh Dalem, Luh Kenten, Luh Kerta, Luh Kerti, Luh Kambren, Luh Kedran, Luh Sadri, Putu Sarma, Ida Bagus Ketu Pidada, Ida Ayu Ketut, and Ida Ayu Made.

In the translated novel, Telaga's mother, grandmother, and other female characters are motivated by personal desires, which mainly include the yearning to be beautiful and the desire to marry a *Brahmana* husband. To be considered beautiful, a woman must possess certain physical attributes such as thick and glossy black hair, fair skin, a well-proportioned body with narrow hips and waist, full round breasts, and must not be too thin or fat. This desire to be beautiful is often linked to a desire to be a fine dancer. Additionally, the desire for a *Brahmana* husband is prevalent among women from high castes due to societal constraints that prohibit them from marrying someone from a lower caste or family, as it would reduce their family's status. In contrast, women from lower castes can marry men of higher status and elevate their status and that of their children. Therefore, women yearn for a *Brahmana* husband to increase their status.

“You are my only hope, Tugeg. One day you must marry a man whose name begins with Ida Bagus. Remember this well!”
(Rusmini, 2011, p. 54)

From the quotation above, we can imagine Telaga as a noblewoman of *Brahmana* descent, whose life is heavily influenced by her mother’s greed and societal expectations based on her caste. Telaga received strict education from childhood to ensure that she upheld the prestigious title of Ida Ayu, which is reserved only for *Brahmanas*. Consequently, she is compelled to conform to her mother’s expectations and follow the caste system’s rules, including marrying a *Brahmana* man. This causes Telaga to feel burdened and troubled. Ultimately, Telaga decides to rebel against her mother’s wishes and wed Wayan Sasmitha, the man she loves, who is a commoner or *Sudra*.

Telaga thinks marrying a *Sudra* man is a way out to get liberation from caste; her life will be happier, and she will get out of the suffering she has been feeling, but apparently not. Further difficulties were that Telaga had to adjust to the lifestyle of a *Sudra* family. Telaga’s life has changed a lot; she is no longer treated as a woman from a priestly family but as a *Sudra* without servants, without expensive clothes and jewels, without warm water for bathing, without nutritious food, and having to earn money. It is proof to her mother-in-law, Luh Gumbreg, that the marriage should never have taken place. The solution she offers to Telaga is that she returns to her priestly family compound to perform *patiwangi*, a ceremony that officially sets a person free from the priestly *Brahmana* caste and makes them a commoner.

This translated novel is the idea and feeling of Oka Rusmini as a woman of Balinese descent who admits that there has been a socio-cultural construction that is disserved to women in Balinese society. Oka Rusmini expresses tension by giving an illustration of a female character who faces gender inequality due to cultural practices and beliefs surrounding gender in Balinese culture. Balinese culture is deeply embedded in patriarchal power structures that affect the social, economic, and political lives of Balinese women in severe ways. Patriarchal forces have long been prevalent in Balinese society, entrenching power imbalances between men and

women and leading to gender-based inequalities in access to resources, rights, and autonomy. As a result, women in this traditionally matrilineal culture are vulnerable to exploitation, cultural subjugation, and marginalization from political and decision-making processes. Furthermore, while women often own land, they are not always given control over it, creating further gender inequalities. In some cases, widows are even made to pay a fee just to have the right to stay on land that was passed down to them by their husbands. Ultimately, the enduring presence of patriarchy in Balinese society causes significant disadvantages for women and has hampered their ability to reach their full potential.

The present writer is extremely interested in choosing this novel as study material because, as a literary work, the translated novel of *Earth Dance* by Oka Rusmini describes a portrait of the Balinese women's life with all their problems. There are three problems that the present writer finds interesting. First, the novel can offer readers fresh insights into Bali Island, known for its stunning scenery, by delving into the specifics of life in Bal. Second, that can explain social facts and the realities of Balinese life well. For example, social class, which is characterized by poverty in lower caste groups, women's resistance, male power in various aspects of life, and traditional problems in it that torture women's minds Third, Oka Rusmini dares to expose criticism of her own culture through her writings, namely by raising the issue of gender inequality experienced by female characters in the novel. Based on the description above, this study is entitled "A Portrait of Ida Ayu Telaga Pidada's Life in Balinese Culture in the Translated Novel "*Earth Dance*" by Oka Rusmini".

1.2 Statement of The Problem

Based on the study background, this *skripsi* aims to address the following questions:

1. How is Balinese culture presented through the perspective of Oka Rusmini in translated novel *Earth Dance*?
2. What are the various forms of gender inequality that Telaga faced in her life?
3. What message about Balinese culture does the writer, Oka Rusmini wish to send through this translated novel?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study are:

1. To know how the Balinese culture presented through the perspective of Oka Rusmini in translated novel entitled *Earth Dance*.
2. To find out the various forms of gender inequality faced by Telaga's life.
3. To discover the message about Balinese culture the writer, Oka Rusmini, wishes to send through this translated novel.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The present writer of this study will demonstrate how the cultural practices and beliefs surrounding gender in Balinese culture contribute to gender inequality. This study helps us gain an understanding of the complexities of gender roles in Indonesian society, especially Bali, and how gender inequality affects different aspects of cultural life, such as economic opportunities and family dynamics. The present writer also wants to contribute to exposing gender inequality in Indonesian society and promoting gender equality through this study.

1.5 Methodology of the Study

In this study, the present writer tries to explain the translated novel *Earth Dance* from a feminist perspective and uses a literary approach to criticize feminist literary works. The study uses library research, namely methods that describe verbally the problems contained in the object of study, the theory used, and data

analysis. The purpose of the study is to identify the factors that contribute to gender inequality in the lives of Balinese women by examining and presenting an analysis of the cultural portrait of Bali. The study intends to describe and uncover the components of the subject being investigated.

The analysis relies on conducting library research to collect data, which entails procuring online resources, internet connectivity, textbooks, journals, and articles. The primary source of data is the translated novel *Earth Dance* by Oka Rusmini, and secondary data comes from several sources, such as looking for references through journals, books, and articles on the internet.

In analyzing the data, the present writer will focus on the literary work itself. Then the results of the data analysis of the *Earth Dance* novel will be compiled in the form of a report and described using a descriptive method, namely by presenting a complete picture of and exposure to the character Ida Ayu Telaga Pidada.

1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study is limited to the translated novel *Earth Dance* by Oka Rusmini as a material object as well as an object of analysis. The formal object of the study is to analyze Balinese culture using a feminist literary approach that focuses on how it harms women and causes gender inequality. The theory of gender inequality, which refers to Fakih's various forms of gender inequality. However, this study limits its discussion to only a discussion on Ida Ayu Telaga Pidada's character.

1.7 Status of the Study

Before doing the study, it is important for the present writer to review previous similar studies so that there are no similarities in the study. The present writer found several papers that support the present writer in conducting research. First, the present writer found a paper belonging to Dr.rer.pol Ied Veda Sitepu, S.S., M.A., published in 2006 and entitled *Women's Struggle for Existence: A Study of Women Characters in Indonesian Novels*. The purpose of this paper can be to provide a more general picture of women (in reality) and expectations about how women should be, among other things. This paper uses the novel *Tarian Bumi* by Oka Rusmini as one of the references in the discussion. Meanwhile, the present

writer focuses on the life of Ida Ayu Telaga Pidada and aims to analyze the portrayal of Balinese culture in the translated novel *Earth Dance* by Oka Rusmini.

Daiya Setiani Gemilang Putri, in 2019, wrote the thesis entitled *The Potrayal of Balinese Caste System Affecting Women's Life as Depictes in the Novel Earth Dance: Critical Discourse Analysis*. The thesis analyses the description of the caste system in the lives of three female characters in the translated novel *Earth Dance* by Oka Rusmini. Meanwhile, the writer uses a feminist literary approach that focuses on the theory of gender inequality, which refers to the forms of gender inequality described by Mansour Fakih and experienced by Ida Ayu Telaga Pidada's character in the translated novel.

Article entitled Potrayal of Balinese Women in Oka Rusmini's *Earth Dance: A Feminist Approach* written by Luh Eka Margarita Setianingtyas, Rita Sutjiati Djohan and Trijanto. The article describes the types of gender inequality faced by Balinese women and their resistance. The present writer discusses the forms of gender inequality faced by the main characters in the translated novel.

1.8 Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 is an introduction. The chapter contains a description of the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, the methodology of the study, the scope and limitations of the study, the status of the study, and the organization of the study.

Chapter 2 is a review of related literature. The chapter contains the theories that underlie the study, such as Balinese culture, gender inequality, and feminist literary criticism.

Chapter 3 is devoted to findings and discussion. The chapter contains the answers to study problems, interprets study findings, integrates study findings into established knowledge collections, modifies existing theories, and explains study results.

Chapter 4 is a conclusion and suggestion. The chapter presents a summary of the results of the study that was described in chapter I.