

CHARACTER REPRESENTATION IN THE COLLECTION OF SAGRA SHORT STORIES BY OKA RUSMINI

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini merupakan deskriptif kualitatif yang bertujuan untuk mengetahui representasi identitas tokoh dalam kumpulan cerpen Sagra karya Oka Rusmini. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan metode simak dan catat, dengan instrumen penelitian berupa peneliti sendiri dan analisis data dilakukan berupa pengumpulan data, reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan simpulan. Hasil penelitian ditemukan representasi identitas tokoh berupa (1) kasta sebagai penentu identitas dan budaya patriarki yang lazim ditemukan di berbagai masyarakat. Identitas sudra mendapat pandangan negatif dari masyarakat sekitar griya dan (2) hegemoni adat istiadat, stratifikasi di Bali dijaga oleh tradisi yang otoritatif bahkan legalitasnya diperkuat oleh etika keluarga. Fanatisme juga berkembang dan diciptakan oleh kalangan bangsawan untuk melegalkan hegemoni bahwa perempuan yang naik wangsa harus dihormati oleh sesama sudra namun derajat perempuan itu tetap di bawah orang-orang murni keturunan Brahmana.

Kata Kunci: *budaya Bali, cerpen, kasta, Rusmini, tokoh*

Abstract

This research is a qualitative descriptive study aimed at understanding the representation of character identity in the collection of short stories titled "Sagra" by Oka Rusmini. Data was collected using observation and note-taking methods, with the researcher herself as the research instrument. The data analysis involved data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The research findings revealed the representation of character identity in two aspects (1) Caste as the determinant of identity: The caste system plays a significant role in shaping identity and is a commonly found patriarchal culture in various societies. The Sudra caste is negatively viewed by the society around the griya (traditional Balinese house). (2) Hegemony of customs and stratification in Bali. The stratification in Bali is maintained by authoritative traditions, reinforced by familial ethics. Fanaticism is also developed and created by the noble class to legitimize the hegemony that when a woman ascends in caste, she should be respected by fellow Sudras, but her status remains below those of pure Brahmin lineage.

Keywords: *Balinese culture, short story, caste, Rusmini, character*

A. INTRODUCTION

Oka Rusmini is a writer from Bali, Indonesia. She was born on January 11, 1967 in Tabanan, Bali and has written several novels, collections of short stories, essays, and poetry. Oka Rusmini is known as a writer who raises the theme of women's lives in Bali, exploring social, cultural and political issues. Some of his famous works include novels *Tarian Bumi* (1995) and *Kenanga* (1998), as well as a collection of short stories *Sagra* (2001) and *Tempurung* (2010). Oka Rusmini is also active as a columnist and speaker at various literary and cultural events.

Abrams (Nurgiyantoro, 2018) argues that a short story is literally called a *novela* which means 'a small new item', then interpreted as a short story. If read, the course of events is more condensed, while the setting or flashback is briefly alluded to. In short stories, only an event is found that is supported by other minor events. Short stories also give a dominant single impression and focus on one character in one situation.

Rusmini is a female writer who consistently describes the life problems of the characters in her writings with an elegy of Balinese women's lives. Through her writing, Rusmini seemed to want to demand justice for Balinese women who were oppressed, both oppressed because of the Hindu caste system and oppressed because of the treatment of the Japanese colonial government (F. T Wulandari, 2019). So often the female characters in the story experience sexual abuse, they sue and ask why she was created as a woman. Because with the beauty of women they have, it doesn't bring happiness, instead it brings misery. Every night they had to serve soldiers *Nippon* who are tempted by the beauty and beauty of their bodies.

Sagra is the title of a collection of short stories by Oka Rusmini which is used as the subject of this study. The advantage of this

short story is that it has a strong and memorable story, especially about the personality of Balinese women. Social issues raised in a collection of short stories *Sagra*'s describes the characterization of each character from a different point of view, as well as how the character of each character is depicted based on cultural values that are very strong in Bali.

Like Rusmini's works in general, a collection of short stories *Sagra* contains a lot of cultural values, especially the culture of the Balinese people. The author is so skilled at presenting the characters who play a role in each story with various personalities. This collection of short stories examines the lives of Balinese women, which incidentally is rarely found in existing literary works, as well as the rebellion against adat, which is seen as systemic injustice by the female characters in it. The female characters try to fight for their destiny by going against custom. The opposition appears in various forms and gives rise to various personalities.

The existence of the conflict above, between the Balinese culture and the injustice of the system against women, is a good gap in this research. How the culture of the Balinese people depicted in the collection of *Sagra* short stories deserves to be described. This certainly cannot be separated from an understanding that Balinese people are associated with Hinduism. In the Vedic Scriptures, especially the sloka Bg. Gita I.41, women are entities that can determine the stability of the family system. If a woman's morals decline, chaos will fall on the family. In other words, the personality typology of the characters in a collection of short stories *Sagra* Oka Rusmini's work deserves to be examined so that, it is possible, the reader can understand how the depiction of women's personalities in the era in the short story and in the current era. Because it has a short form, short stories have different characteristics from novels or romances, namely the concentration and condensation of something

to tell. The story is not written broadly with a long plot, but is brief, detailed, and well understood because the prologue, conflict stages, to the epilogue are presented briefly and concisely (Nurgiyantoro, 2018). In other words, a collection of short stories *Sagra* contains more than one personality written in simple language and easy for readers to understand.

As cultured beings, humans cannot be separated from cultural elements. Culture which is closely related to life is also stated in literary works. Cultural values consist of a number of views or thoughts regarding the things that are most valuable and valuable in human life (Sagala & Panggabean, 2022). In the fact that humans do not live in a vacuum. Humans live as social human beings, it is impossible without cooperation with other people. The same goes for the Balinese people and their culture.

Balinese culture is a way of life that develops and is owned by the Balinese people and is passed down from generation to generation (Suweta, 2020). Balinese people basically live using various life systems, namely religious systems, science, art, and language. Balinese cultural values are also contained in literary works because literature is not born from a cultural vacuum. In the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), cultural values are abstract concepts regarding basic issues that are very important and valuable in human life. The cultural value system is the highest and most abstract level of customs Koentjaraningrat in (Verdial et al., 2021). Cultural values are conceptions about what lives in the minds of most members of a society regarding what they consider valuable, valuable, and important in life (Fitriani et al., 2020). Based on this understanding, it can be concluded that cultural values are something in the form of values that have been embedded and agreed upon by the community in the form of habits as a form of behavior and responses to a situation after or before it occurs. In

psychology, cultural values can indirectly influence a person's characteristics. Culture is often seen as having a very important contribution in determining the typology of human personality.

The representation of the character's identity is an important part of the realm of the study of literary psychology. Literary psychology involves a psychological analysis of the characters in literary works, including an understanding of their identities. The representation of character identity involves the way the writer describes the characters in literary works, including aspects such as personality, motivation, emotions, internal conflicts, and character development (Septiadi et al., 2019). In the study of literary psychology, researchers and literary critics analyze the way these characters are represented and how these representations relate to human experience more generally. They see how a character's identity is formed through interaction with the environment, events, and other figures in literary works.

Through a psychological approach, literary psychology researchers can discuss how the characters in literary works represent or reflect various aspects of human identity, such as gender, culture, social, and psychology. They can also analyze how changes in character identity can occur along with plot and narrative developments in literary works. By studying representations of character identities in literary works, literary psychology can provide insight into human complexity and provide a deeper understanding of life, human psychology, and the human condition more broadly.

Representation is a description of the process of interpretation, knowledge or explanation of messages physically in semiotic theory (Purwanti & Suana, 2020). Character representation is the process of depicting individuals or characters in a narrative, with all the uniqueness, complexity, and emotional dimensions attached to them. Through character representation, writers and

filmmakers are able to build emotional bonds between the audience and the characters, as well as convey deep messages about human life.

As a reinforcement in this study, three previous studies that are still relevant are presented. the three studies were conducted by (Wulandari, 2019); (Verdial et al., 2021); (Kusniati et al., 2022); and (Melati, 2019). At a glance, the similarities between the three studies and this research lie in the topic under study, namely the personality typology of the characters in a story. However, the difference between the three studies and this study lies in the subjects studied.

B.METHOD

A qualitative descriptive design was chosen because this research describes and interprets objects in the form of character representations in a collection of short stories *Sagra* by Oka Rusmini. The subject of this research is a collection of short stories in a collection of short stories *Sagra* by Oka Rusmini. Meanwhile, the objects in this study are the characters in the collection of short stories. In this study note-taking techniques were used to document data that answered the problem formulation. The research instrument used in this study was the researchers themselves with the help of data cards to group data. Data analysis by interpreting data in the form of words. The data analyzed is the data generated through the method of observing and recorded in the data card.

C.RESULT & DISCUSSION

Results

After conducting the research, data were found in the form of character representations in the collection of *Sagra* short stories by Oka Rusmini. The data findings are (1) caste as a determinant of identity, and (2) patriarchal culture & hegemony of customs.

Discussion

Caste as a Determinant of Identity

Caste or caste system is a system of social classification that is commonly found in various societies, including Balinese society. Anwar in (Hermawati & Apriliyani, 2020) reveals that caste is the position or classification of society based on heredity. The caste system is called the "Catur Wangsa" which consists of Brahmins, the highest caste or nobility consisting of priests and people who work in the religious field. They have an important role in carrying out religious ceremonies and giving direction to the community.

Kshatriyas, a caste consisting of knights or warriors. They are responsible for the security and defense of the kingdom, as well as maintaining the security of the people. Vaishyas, a caste consisting of traders, farmers and breeders. They have an important role in meeting the economic needs of the people and Sudra: Castes consisting of manual laborers. They do not have any title and belong to the lowest caste. The four castes influence various aspects of Balinese life including identity, rights, roles and relationships.

Caste divisions often discriminate against gender, especially women of the Shudra class who marry or live with the nobility. In a collection of short stories *Festival* the figure of *Sagra* for example, he lives and lives in the griya environment as a "father" or helper. *Sagra's* identity as a sudra means that he often gets negative views from the people around the griya. There is also *Dayu Ratih* in short stories *Putu Menolong Tuhan* she got stereotyped from her husband's family for being a noble who married a sudra.

"Dalam keputusan yang dialami Dayu Ratih ada sedikit kebahagiaan yang diberikan oleh anaknya, Putu. Seorang anak yang mampu memberikan pengertian pada batinku. Anak yang memberiku kekuatan bahwa aku mempunyai peranan di dunia ini. Kadang-kadang ada perasaan gelisah, sedih dan terluka. Malamnya aku masih gelisah. Tubuh laki-laki yang kucinta tidur nyenyak di

sampingku.”(Rusmini, 2017)

“Entah apa yang terjadi pada diriku akhir-akhir ini. Rasa-rasanya aku selalu ingin menangis, kadang kesedihan datang begitu tiba-tiba. Kesedihan itu begitu mengusikku, bahkan melukaiku.” (Rusmini, 2017)

The caste issue in Bali, if examined more deeply, seems very complicated. False lineage determination makes the representation of humans appear biased. For example, if you are born into the Sudra class, you may not be raised as a child by a Brahmin. Rusmini clearly describes that discrimination is created by the system itself. (Jannah, 2022) in his writings also reveals that caste issues can influence the mindset of Balinese society, not only make it difficult for the Sudras who are seen as "lower class" people. Caste problems also become a fear for Brahmins, especially women who fall in love with men of different castes. .

In the short story *Pemahat Abad* it is also found how caste almost kills someone. Gubreg who was born as a sudra must harbor his feelings for Dayu Centaga who comes from the aristocratic class. The love felt by Gubreg was forced to be buried because he was hindered by caste. In Bali, names become an identity for both women and men. This identity can change depending on his social position from the time he is born until he marries (Hermawati & Apriliyani, 2020). In the caste system, giving a name to someone is influenced by the caste they belong to when they are born into the world, what Gubreg experienced out there is also likely to be experienced by other Sudra men. Caste that binds Balinese life also influences life choices. Balinese women in making life choices must be based on the approval of men or the family (Darmayanti, 2014). In a collection of short stories *Sagra* Pidada's character is proof that Pidada is encouraged to marry. Since she was young, she has been preoccupied with business affairs abroad so that she has grown into an independent

woman. No Brahmin man wants to marry her (Rusmini, 2017).

“Tidak bisakah kau menikah. Memberiku seorang cucu untukku, Pidada.”

“Menikahlah, Pidada, beri aku cucu.” (Rusmini, 2017:103-104)

Pidada is also told to have a lover who is a sudra, but the man is not a nobleman so he cannot marry Pidada. What happened to Pidada is a common thing that happens in the life of Balinese people, how the Brahmins and Sudras have walls that are difficult to tear down. Balinese women or men are forbidden to have feelings of liking or interest in people who are not equal. Things like feelings certainly cannot be regulated because they involve emotionality regardless of who the person is. Although in the end many marry with unequal life choices, of course other problems arise, such as the quote below

“Yang sering membuatku merasa sakit hati, mertuaku sering mengungkit gelar kebangsawananku. Sering kudengar dia bicara dengan ketiga anak perempuannya, sial jadinya kalau keluarga kebanyakan mengambil perempuan bangsawan.” (Rusmini, 2017:155)

Dayu Ratih on short stories *Putu Menolong Tuhan* is one of the clear proofs that aristocratic women who "nyerod" are not always well received by the male family. He is described as often getting ridiculed, unpleasant and rude treatment by his in-laws and in-laws because he comes from the Brahmins.

In one of the excerpts from a short story entitled *Sepotong Kaki*, one can see how the caste system also discriminates against women. A character named Centaga has no right to call his mother Mother because of the caste differences between them. Centaga is the son of a Brahmin man who is married to a Sudra woman. Even though Centaga became a Brahmin when he was born, his mother was still of the Sudra caste. His mother is lower than Centaga and he loses his rights as a mother for Centaga. This can be seen from the

way Centaga calls him, as in the quote below.

"Perempuan aneh itu kupanggil 'meme'. Aku tak boleh memanggilnya 'ibu', karena perempuan yang melahirkanku itu bukan seorang perempuan brahmana." (Rusmini, 2017:43)

Apart from that, the short story entitled *Cenana* also shows the caste system which positions women in a discriminatory manner. Luh Sapti is a member of the Sudra caste who married a Brahmin man, when she married she was five months pregnant. When her daughter, Cenana, is born and is supposed to be in the Brahmin caste because of her father, she loses her rights as a Brahmin woman. Cenana had no right to use the name Ida Ayu, like a Brahmin woman, because her mother was pregnant before the marriage took place. If he has a younger brother, he must obey and obey his younger sibling. In the story, Cenana is grateful that his mother doesn't have any more children after him because he doesn't want to respect children who are younger than him. The following is an excerpt that shows the discrimination that occurred to Luh Sapti and Cenana who lost their rights as Brahmins.

"Ibuku seorang perempuan sudra, Luh Sapti namanya. Karena dia menikah dengan Ida Bagus Dawer, dia bergelar Jero Sandat ketika kawin dengan bapakku, Jero Sandat telah hamil 5 bulan dan baru dikawini. Karena itu orang-orang desa tidak mengakui Cenana sebagai Ida Ayu. Dia memang boleh tetap tinggal di Griya, tempat keluarga besarnya yang keluarga brahmana. Tapi, haknya sebagai keluarga dicabut." (Rusmini, 2017:184)

Balinese women's identity can be seen not only from a person's name and nickname, body image is also the identity of a Balinese woman. Caste can be seen from the differences in the bodies of Brahmin and Sudra women. Brahmin women are described as so beautiful while Sudra women are very rough and ugly.

Patriarchal Culture & Hegemony of Customs

Patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, suppress and exploit women. Patriarchy is a social and political system that is dominated by men and gives them greater power and control than women. Patriarchal systems have existed for thousands of years in almost all cultures around the world, and influence many aspects of life, including family, religion, politics, economy, and culture.

In a patriarchal system, men are considered as the main leaders and decision makers, while women are often seen as subordinates or objects that must be controlled. This system can also produce gender inequalities, such as inequality in rights and opportunities, discrimination in employment, sexual and domestic violence, and the imposition of rigid and stereotypical gender roles.

The family system in Bali is very patriarchal. One's offspring will follow the male ancestor. When a woman is unable to bear a son, she is considered an imperfect woman and is pressured by her family to have a son. In addition, the patriarchy that developed in Bali also forced girls to marry men who were equal. This emphasis is usually placed on girls from the time they are small. In a collection of short stories *Sagra Cenana's* character has difficulty living with his mother, he works to fulfill his daily needs.

"Dari butir-butir kelapa itulah Cenana dan Sandat hidup. Tiap hari dia harus memarut kelapa, membuat minyak kelapa. Pagi-pagi harus ke pasar. Agak siang pulang, membantu ibunya memasak. Mereka punya warung kecil. Ibunya menjual lawar dan pepes tlengis (terbuat dari rebusan kelapa). Satu perak-dua perak. Keringat dua perempuan itu dipertaruhkan untuk kelanjutan hidup. Ibunya sendiri tidak mampu menyekolahkan Cenana." (Rusmini, 2017:186)

In the quote above, it is clear how Cenana and Sandat, his mother, live full of patriarchal pressure. Making a living that should be done by men as the head of the family is actually done by women. Rusmini satirically describes Balinese women as all-rounders.

The patriarchal system has a strong influence on patterns of social behavior carried out against women, resulting in domestic violence and psychological impact on women (Ariyanti & Ardhana, 2020). As experienced by Luh Sagrep in short stories *sita* she experienced humiliation by her own husband and ended up shooting her husband dead.

Genealogically, the life of the Balinese people still adheres to a feudal inheritance or classification into dynasties. The influence of this social stratification also fosters eternal patriarchy. For example, in marriages that are termed "menek" of the dynasty and "nyerod" marriages. Menek wangsa is a term for a Shudra woman who is married to a Brahmin. The honorary title given is called jero. Meanwhile, noble women or Brahmins who marry Sudra men will have their royal titles revoked and removed from the list of descendants at the griya.

In a short *Sagra* Rusmini describes how the social life that must be lived by women. Either those who are pressing the wangsa or nyerod. In *Putu Menolong Tuhan* Dayu Ratih is a noble woman who is stubborn, she gets unpleasant treatment from her in-laws and in-laws. Dayu Ratih lost her royal title and was also abandoned by her family, as quoted below

".... Aku telah membawa aib bagi keluarga bangsawan di lingkungan griya karena menikah dengan laki-laki tidak sederajat." (Rusmini, 2017:158)

Marriages carried out by "nyerod wangsa" result in women being socially sanctioned. Like Dayu Ratih, she is considered to bring disgrace for marrying a Sudra man. Stratification in Bali is maintained by authoritative traditions and even its legality is reinforced by family ethics. Fanaticism also developed and was created by the nobility to legalize hegemony that women who ascended the dynasty must be respected by fellow Sudras but the degree of women remained below those of pure Brahmin descent.

Balinese customs refer to various traditions, beliefs, and rules followed by Balinese people in their daily lives. Balinese customs are heavily influenced by Hindu-Buddhist beliefs and continue to be practiced to this day. In a collection of short stories *Sagra* there is a rule that prohibits a brahmin from worshipping at the village temple because it is considered to tarnish the purity of their blood, therefore every Brahmin family has a temple in their respective homes called pura griya. Meanwhile, someone with the Sudra caste is only allowed to worship in the village temple.

"Mereka memang tidak pernah sembahyang ke Pura desa. Karena mereka sebagai kasta tertinggi dalam struktur masyarakat Bali, bersembahyang di Pura desa milik masyarakat desa tak ubahnya mencemarkan kebangsawanan." (Rusmini, 2017:91)

Adat means the way of life. Women are the people who are given the task of maintaining adat, therefore in Bali adat has a major influence on the lives of its women. From any caste, when a woman violates her customary rules, she will be considered as a destroyer of her family's order. In the Brahmin caste in particular, their descendants are obliged to obey what their ancestors have lived or entrusted to them. When it is violated, everyone will assume that he no longer has faith in his custom.

"Orang hidup itu memiliki aturan, Siwi. Leluhur keluarga besar kita sudah menanamkannya untuk kita? Apa yang kau perbuat kepada mereka?!" (Rusmini, 2017:176)

The quote tells about Siwi, a Brahmin woman who cannot have children and wants to adopt a child from a Sudra woman. The people around him had suggested Siwi to take a child from one of his siblings who was clearly from the Brahmin caste, or sleep with one of them in order to get a Brahmin child, but he refused and instead chose a child from the Sudra caste. Apart from violating the rules in raising Sudra's child, she also violated the normative femininity of Balinese women, namely not being able to give birth to a child.

This deed made people think of her as an uncivilized Brahmin woman.

Then according to custom a Brahmin must be served by the Sudra caste. If a Brahmin has a need with a Sudra, then someone from the Sudra caste should face the Brahmin residence. This can be seen in the following quotation.

“Hyang Jagat! Harusnya tiang yang datang ke tempat Ratu bukan Ratu yang datang ke gubuk tiang. Harusnya Ratu tidak datang sendiri Ratu bisa memerintah Wang Jero. Kalau Ratu berkenan tiang pasti akan datang.” (Rusmini, 2017:169-170)

D. CONCLUSION

Representation of the character's identity in a collection of short stories *Festival Oka* Rusmini's work found 3 (three) representations which included (1) caste as a determinant of identity which often occurs within the family circle of Balinese women found as many as 5 (five) data which states that one of the differentiating degrees is caste. Caste divisions often discriminate against gender, especially women of the Shudra class who marry or live with the nobility. In a collection of short stories *Sagra*, Shudra women are also described as *father* from the Brahmin class. (2) patriarchal culture and hegemony of customs were found as many as 5 (five data). Balinese customs refer to various traditions, beliefs, and rules followed by Balinese people in their daily lives. Balinese customs are heavily influenced by Hindu-Buddhist beliefs and continue to be practiced to this day. In a collection of short stories *Sagra* there is a rule that prohibits a brahmin from worshipping at the village temple because it is considered to tarnish the purity of their blood, therefore every Brahmin family has a temple in their respective homes called *pura griya*.

For other researchers, the results of this study are used as an illustration regarding the study of character representation. In addition, this research can also be used as a

review or comparative literature in similar studies in the future. As in this study, similar studies were also used in literature review.

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