

WOMEN SUBORDINATION IN *TEMPURUNG* BY OKA RUSMINI

Hiqma Nur Agustina
Politeknik Negeri Malang
hiqma@polinema.ac.id

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Abstract: Women experience a lot of repression from culture, gender stereotypes, and the social environment in society. The depiction of the women's suffering was written in a novel entitled *Tempurung* by Oka Rusmini. The aims of this research are (1) to identify Balinese women's marriages and the ownership of their bodies that never belong to them; and (2) to identify the gender stereotype that often makes Balinese women not have the right to determine their lives. This study uses gender and patriarchy concept, qualitative and library methods. The results of the study are (1) the women characters in the novel are the victims of the culture and rules in the society; (2) the gender stereotype means women characters can only surrender and not dare to rebel. They are trapped in the culture and tradition that makes them suffer and speechless in their whole life. Gender stereotypes make them silent and finally give up on the culture surrounding them. Their lives and deaths are a fate that must be accepted without having the right and voice to be themselves. The results of the research strengthened the previous research about women's subordination because of culture, gender stereotypes, and social environment. They are alive, but they do not have the right to determine their body and soul.

Keywords: Balinese women, culture repression, gender stereotype, subordination, social environment

INTRODUCTION

Women often experience oppression from culture, gender stereotypes, and the social environment in which they live. The position of women who are often victims has made several writers make it a topic of writing both at home and abroad in novels and short stories as part of literary works. Several writers who raise the issue of women who are victims of patriarchy, gender injustice, subordination, and repression deserve appreciation, including NH. Dini (Agustina, 2013) and Saut Situmorang (Agustina, 2023). Several talented young writers also try to raise women's issues in their writing, such as Dianing Widya Yudhistira with *Sintren* (Agustina, 2021); Zainul Muttaqin with *Gadis Pantai* (Agustina, 2021); Evi Rahmawati with *Kegelisahan Madu* (Agustina, 2021). Of the several works of writers that raise women's issues and have been used as research for literary criticism, another work that raises the subordination of Balinese women is very interesting to study.

The novel entitled *Tempurung* by Oka Rusmini shows in detail that Balinese women are victims of never-ending male subordination. Oka Rusmini tells the story of women who live in an absurd world of marriage. The research gap between this research and previous research is that it focuses on the subordination experienced by the main characters of the novel who are Balinese women. Moreover, this research strengthens previous research that women are still often victims of subordination, gender stereotypes, and a social environment that is close to patriarchal culture.

This study investigates Balinese female characters in the novel *Tempurung* experiencing subordination and repression in their married life because their position is always weak and they cannot fight against the traditions and culture that are unique to Balinese society. Indonesia is known as a society rich in customs and culture, one of which is the patrilineal kinship system which contributes to the emergence of subordination and repression towards women (Sibarani & Gulo, 2020). Apart from that, this study also reveals that the female characters in the novel *Tempurung* are tied to their marital status which is a burden on their lives to the point that they do not feel like they have a body that should be their own.

Moreover, this study is expected to strengthen the study about women's subordination which makes them become the victims in their society. Oka Rusmini is one of the many Indonesian female writers who uncovers the social repression that women have suffered (Sunardi in Bandel, 2006). The emergence of female writers is recognized as a new chapter in literature in Indonesia. She noted the function of novels to break down ways of talking about various taboos. One of them certainly raises various issues of subordination, gender injustice, and stereotypes that shackle the lives of Balinese women.

METHOD

Previous research shows that women often experience repression, and subordination from the patriarchal system, culture, gender stereotypes, and the social environment. This research specifically looks at Balinese women who live confined in a culture that upholds caste and customs. Through literary works, women writers voice the oppressed conditions of Balinese women that apply to this day. Qualitative methods are used in this research because they are very appropriate for exploring and understanding the meaning of several individuals or groups of people that originate from social problems (Cresswell, 2016). The data of the study are collected by doing the following steps: reading the novel carefully for many times, identifying the data related to women subordination, culture repression, and gender stereotype, inventorying the data, classifying the data, selecting the data and at last analyzing the data.

Ann Oakley (2015) states that gender is a cultural issue that refers to the social classification of men and women into masculine and feminine, different due to time and place. The fixed nature of sex must be acknowledged, as well as the fluid nature of gender. She also added that gender is a difference that is not biological and is not God's nature. Mosse (1996) explained that gender is a set of roles, such as costumes and masks in the theater, conveying to others that they are feminine and masculine. Furthermore, he also stated that the social structure of society which divides men and women is often detrimental to women. Women are expected to be able to take care of and do various household chores, even though they work outside the household, whereas men have very little responsibility in taking care of the household. Some people think that household tasks and

child care are women's duties, even though women work. There are boundaries regarding what is appropriate and inappropriate for men and women to do when carrying out household tasks.

Violence against women is common. According to Diarsi (Pona & Wahyuni, 2002), it is triggered by unequal gender relations, which are characterized by injustice in relations between the sexes which is closely related to power. Fakihi (1997) stated that violence against fellow humans basically comes from various sources, but violence against certain genders, for example women, is caused by gender assumptions. Violence against women originates from patriarchy culture. Patriarchy according to Bhasin (1996) is a system of male dominance and superiority, as well as a system of control over women who are dominated. According to Plato (2009), literature is an imitation or depiction of reality (mimesis). Literary works must be an exemplary form of the universe as well as a model of the reality of everyday human life. Damono (1979) explained that literature displays images of life, and life itself is a social reality. Furthermore, Agustina (2020) described a novel as a long story about life, having a fictional or non-fictional nature.

There are several techniques to analyze the data. They were exposing, enumerating, explaining, interpreting, and the last one is concluding. The interpretation and the explanation are done from the point of view of gender studies. The female characters in the novel *Tempurung* can be said to be dealing with social problems in the form of repression, subordination from the patriarchal system, culture, gender stereotypes, and the social environment in which they live.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Balinese Women in *Tempurung*

The subordination of women in the novel *Tempurung* consists of three things. First, cultural repression is the central issue in the novel. Several female characters experience cultural repression which has an impact on the lives they live. They are victims of Balinese culture which glorifies caste. The castes listed in the *catur wangsa* consist of four groups, namely: *Brahmin*, *Ksatria*, *Vaisya*, and *Sudra*. Brahmins are descendants of religious leaders who during the kingdom era were trusted to lead religious ceremonies. People from this caste will generally have the first name Ida Bagus for men and Ida Ayu for women. For the Brahmin caste, the words 'I' and 'Ni' are automatically replaced with 'Bagus' which means handsome, and 'Ayu' which means beautiful. Furthermore, Kshatriyas are descendants of kings, nobles, or royalty. People from this caste generally have the names Anak Agung, Cokorda, or Gusti. Then for the Vaisya who are descendants of traders and businessmen from the kingdom era, they have names such as Dewa, Desak, Ngakan, Kompyang, Sang, and Si. Lastly is the Sudra group who previously worked as workers or laborers, but nowadays their jobs are more varied, such as working in the government or private sector. Sudra people usually use birth orders without a specific title, namely Wayan for the first child, Made for the second child, Nyoman for the third child, and Ketut for the fourth child (Bandana, 2015).

In the novel, the female character who experiences cultural repression because of her caste is Ida Ayu Made Jelangga. Jelangga insisted on marrying a man of her choice who had a different religion, tradition, and caste. Since being accepted at the Bandung Institute of Technology, her mother has often asked Jelangga to cancel her intention to study in Bandung. The following quote shows that caste is everything for Balinese women who have the Vaisya caste

"Ibu hanya minta kamu sadar. Kulit kita berbeda dengan kulit orang lain. Ingat itu, Jelangga. Bagaimana jadinya kalau kau sekolah di luar, lalu bertemu dengan lelaki lain yang kulitnya berbeda dengan kulit kita?" (Rusmini, 2010: 153).

"Mom just asks you to be aware. Our skin is different from other people's skin. Remember that, Jelangga. What happens if you go to school outside, and then meet other men whose skin is different from ours?" (Rusmini, 2010: 153).

What the female character Jelangga experiences is in line with Bhasin (1996) that the pressure to marry a man who has the same caste as herself comes from patriarchy culture. The dominance and superiority of Balinese traditions, which are thick with patriarchy culture, make Jelangga's life suffer because of tradition. Jelangga's resistance to caste rules that shackle high-caste Balinese women from marrying people outside their caste shows a desire to challenge Balinese traditions and customs that have been going on for generations.

"Kenapa aku tidak bisa menceritakan pada keluargaku kalau aku mencintai seorang lelaki dan dia bukan seorang Ida Bagus? Kenapa keluargaku tetap menghidangkan menu seorang Ida Bagus di pintu masuk untuk menyambut kedatanganku? Dosa apa yang sedang kukandung? Kutukan apa yang sedang dilimpahkan padaku? Bukankah kelahiranku ditunggu para leluhur? Dan leluhur meminjam jasadku untuk lahir Kembali. Memperbaiki masa silamnya. Kenapa aku harus jatuh cinta?" (Rusmini, 2010: 156).

"Why can't I tell my family that I love a man and he's not Ida Bagus? Why does my family still serve an Ida Bagus menu at the entrance to welcome me? What sin am I carrying? What curse is being bestowed upon me? Wasn't my birth awaited by the ancestors? And the ancestors borrowed my body to be reborn. Repairing the past. Why should I fall in love?" (Rusmini, 2010: 156).

This form of resistance to caste resulted in the removal of Jelengala from the family register. There is no longer a name or recognition for him. Jelangga chose to live outside the house because she felt calmer and freer, no longer bound by the rules that often shackled her status as a high-caste woman in Bali. The second is gender stereotypes. Factors that cause gender problems include patriarchy culture, unequal education and legal protection, and society's mindset. This inequality occurs because there is still an old paradigm in Indonesian society which considers that women are naturally below men, even though currently many women are more advanced than in previous years. Gender differs from the characteristics of men and women in a biological sense. Gender is a cultural concept used to identify differences in roles, behavior, etc. between men and women that develop in a society based on social engineering (Umar, 1998). In its stereotypical gender representation experienced by the female character Ni Luh Putu Saring, the novel *Tempurung* reproduces stereotypes that are very unfavorable for women, especially the character Ni Luh Nyoman Glatik who is depicted as a woman who tends to become a lesbian because of her hatred towards a father figure who loves his birds more rather than his wife and children as in the following quote.

"Kau jangan memaksa dan merayuku untuk memasukkan potongan lelaki dalam memori otakku! Aku benci pada mereka! Bau mereka persis seperti burung-burung yang dipelihara Bapak. Burung-burung yang telah membunuh Ibu dan saudara-saudaraku! Tega sekali kau menyuruhku mencintai makhluk yang telah menghancurkan seluruh hidup dan impianku sebagai manusia!" (Rusmini, 2010: 45-46).

"You can't force and seduce me into inserting pieces of men into my brain's memory! I hate them! They smell exactly like the birds that Dad keeps. The birds that killed my mother and brothers! How dare you tell me to love a creature that has destroyed all my life and dreams as a human!" (Rusmini, 2010: 45-46).

Meanwhile, the female character Ni Luh Putu Saring who is called Saring or Bu Barla as an attribute of her husband's name experiences quite massive gender stereotypes. Since childhood, Saring has always followed people. Her fate is unclear, she once became a domestic helper in a Chinese house just to finish elementary school. Then she kept a fruit shop at Badung Market until she finished high school. She does whatever she can to make ends meet. The family tree is muddled and she doesn't know who her father and mother are. Her life was filled with chaos, bitterness, ugliness, and insults from the people of the village where she was born. The peak of Saring's suffering was when her husband, Barla, admitted that he was having an affair with another woman.

"*Aku selingkuh, Luh.*" "*Pelacurkah dia?*"

"*Bukan.*" "*Apa kerjanya?*" "*Salon. Pegawai salon. Aku cinta padanya. Tak bisa pisah dengannya.*"

"*Dia pasti muda?*" "*Ya.*" "*Kau puas tidur dengannya?*"

"*Ya. Aku jadi punya semangat hidup lagi.*" (Rusmini, 2010: 53-54).

"*I'm cheating, Luh.*" "*Is she a whore?*"

"*No.*" "*What does it do?*" "*Salon. Salon employee. I love him. Can't be separated from him.*"

"*He must be young?*" "*Yes.*" "*Are you satisfied sleeping with her?*"

"*Yeah.. I have a spirit to live again.*" (Rusmini, 2010: 53-54).

What is very interesting to observe about the character of Saring is that she is presented as an anti-mainstream female figure in the text. Gender stereotypes that are often attached to women, namely that women are weak, helpless creatures and also accept their husband's bad treatment, are faced consciously and remain strong. She does not show herself as a weak woman even though her heart is hurt. Third, women's subordination is caused by the social environment. Life in the group is expected to be run by the values upheld by the group. This system provides direction to the goals that bind a group. In this case, what is meant is the people who live in Bali. Koentjaraningrat (1985: 25) provides limitations regarding the cultural value system which consists of the conceptions that live in the minds of most members of society regarding the things they should consider highly valuable in life. Therefore, a system of cultural values usually functions as the highest guide for human behavior. Other systems of human behavior at a more concrete level, such as special rules, laws, and norms, are all guided by this cultural value system.

Oka Rusmini's courage in breaking things that are considered taboo to be discussed, namely Balinese traditions that are considered sacred and not suitable for writing, is an extraordinary achievement. Moreover, Rusmini consistently wrote, resulting in three novel titles, *Tarian Bumi* (2000), *Kenanga* (2003), and *Tempurung* (2010) which criticized Balinese traditions. The subordination experienced by another female character named Luh Siplek who is bound by marriage, lives in a shackled condition - she has no rights to her property, she does not even feel like she owns her own body. Balinese culture which prioritizes men being seen both in the public and domestic spheres has an impact on the psychology of Siplek's female characters. She felt she was insignificant and worthless. Siplek lives in a remote village. She was 16 years old when she

was married off to a man from her village, Wayan Payuk. Siplek's parents, whose income is unclear, hope that Siplek's marriage to a landowner will be able to improve their lives and cover their daily living needs. Siplek bears the burden of being forcibly submerged so the result is a series of anger that overflows in Siplek's brain and bloodstream. Siplek firmly stated that her resistance to the social construction of Balinese society was to break down things that were considered taboo.

Tidak bisakah kita menentang alam, Tuhan, dan takdir? Aku ingin melawan mereka dan jadi pemenang? Melawan apa yang selama ini tabu bagi kehidupan manusia. Aku ingin memiliki jalan sendiri. Jalan hidup yang kubangun dan kupercayai sendiri." (Rusmini, 2010: 77-78).

Can't we go against nature, God, and fate? I want to fight them and be the winner. Against what has been taboo in human life. I want to have my way. A way of life that I build and believe in myself." (Rusmini, 2010: 77-78).

The long-term role of women is so closely linked to maternal function that teachings about the traits inherited from women are limited by ideas of personality. The ideal image of women is also limited by the function of motherhood and the ideal that is raised for a daughter is to become a mother. Therefore, views that do not emphasize the personal talents of a productive and creative woman repress women more. Songi, female character in the text is more tied to the biological function of women, namely pregnancy and childbirth. This view does not emphasize women as individuals, but rather women as part of a homogeneous biological category. The limited role of the Songi character is a result of thinking that is in line with restrictions regarding women's place, namely places, and functions that are related to the function of managing the household and the reproductive process. The following quote shows the role and function of women solely related to reproduction. Women are only reproductive machines and fulfilling biological needs is another form of social construction that represses women as seen in the following quote. The woman in question is the character Songi, Siplek's mother.

Adik-adik Siplek banyak. Lelaki satu-satunya di rumah hanya Bapak, yang hanya bisa menaburkan benih di perut ibunya. Enam orang adik, semua Perempuan. Ibunya mirip pabrik bayi disbanding manusia. Kerjanya hanya mengandung, sampai tidak sempat merawat diri. Tubuhnya kurus. Bayi yang dilahirkan selalu premature. Semua itu karena perempuan tolol itu sangat percaya pada lelaki yang mengawininya. (Rusmini, 2010: 79).

There are many Siplek siblings. The only man in the house is Dad, who can only sow seeds in her mother's stomach. Six younger siblings, all girls. The mother is more like a baby factory than a human. Her only job is to be pregnant, so she doesn't have time to take care of herself. Her body is thin. Babies born are always premature. All this because the stupid woman trusted the man who married her (Rusmini, 2010: 79).

Songi's helplessness in fighting against tradition and social construction, namely that not having male offspring is the end of the world and women who cannot give birth to male babies are considered unlucky women, making them just victims of a social system. In line with Rusmini, Radical feminists argue that gender inequality lies precisely in the biological differences between men and women themselves. According to them, male dominance or female subordination is a conceptual model that can explain various other forms of oppression.

Domination of Patriarchy Culture

Balinese society also adheres to a patriarchy system, namely a system ruled by men, whose power is exercised through social, political, economic, and religious institutions (Gamble, 2004). Several female characters in the text receive gender stereotypes because of patriarchy culture. The

female character who experiences subordination to patriarchy culture is Ni Made Arsiki Wulandari. She is a woman who was raised in Denpasar by two parents who were also born in the city of Denpasar, Bali. She was born into a well-off family until one day her house and land were confiscated because her father had billions of rupiah in debt. Starting from this incident, Arsiki's life changed completely, she had to work and become a perfume Sales Promotion Girl. Her meeting with Jagra, a rich man who was her loyal customer, ended in marriage. Jagra is a successful rich man. From their marriage, they were blessed with two children: Putu Ayu Zaza Marsawa and Made Bagus Andreas Marsawa. Their son, Bagus Andreas, apparently inherited the behavior of Arsiki's father, Jagra. He was addicted to drinking and womanizing. The strong patriarchal culture in Balinese society makes her always think that Made is the sole heir to the business she built, not his daughter Putu who is smarter and responsible for handling family business affairs.

Aku tidak memiliki cinta. Aku hanya memiliki ketakutan-ketakutan. Apa yang akan terjadi dengan Putu dan Made bila aku tak ada? Dua makhluk berbeda jenis kelamin yang sama-sama keluar dari rahimku itu memiliki karakter bak bumi dan langit. Bagaimana aku harus membela Made, kalau lelaki kecilku itu sadar haknya sebagai seorang anak lelaki Bali. Bahwa dialah yang jadi pewaris tunggal! (Rusmini, 2010: 21).

I don't have love. I only have fears. What will happen to Putu and Made if I'm not around? Two creatures of different genders that both came out of my womb have characters like the earth and the sky. How should I defend Made, if my little man is aware of his rights as a Balinese boy? That he is the sole heir! (Rusmini, 2010: 21).

Research on the rights and obligations of Hindu women in the family and society, Kiriana (2017) explains the existence of *Stri Sasana*, namely the rules of life for women in Hinduism, grouping the rights and obligations of women into two groups, namely the *Brahmacari* period and the *Grehasta* period. During the *Brahmacari* period, women's main obligation was to learn to enrich themselves with knowledge and skills and to cultivate mental maturity. Meanwhile, during the *Grehasta* period, a woman had responsibilities that focused more on the *Artha* aspect, namely the effort to obtain property to support the realization of family prosperity, as well as *Kama*, namely seeking to fulfill satisfaction, enjoyment, and happiness in life physically and spiritually. From the explanation above, it can be said that the role of Hindu women has a double burden in society. They are also required to be able to act as breadwinners and also as satisfiers of pleasure and happiness for their husbands. A double burden that is interpreted as a form of repression for Balinese women.

In Manawadharmanasatra IX. 27-28 states, "Giving birth to children, caring for those who have been born, and daily life for men, all of this is the woman who causes it. This rule in the Hindu tradition is also the reason why the character Ni Nyoman Songi becomes pregnant and gives birth to 7 children. Unfortunately, all the babies she gave birth to were premature because she did not love all the babies she was carrying, and were only reproductive machines. Her husband, I Wayan Sager, who was supposed to be a protector and support system, instead acted as an irresponsible husband and father. His job is a butcher. Thugs who live by guarding immoral places (Rusmini, 2010: 106).

Wife in Hindu literature is 1) *Ardhangani*, namely being an inseparable part of life; 2) *Jaya* means a woman who gives birth to her child; 3) *Sahadharmini*, namely the wife who has a very important role in social and religious obligations; 4) *Dharmapatni*, namely the wife as an important partner in carrying out worship of God. Based on the sloka excerpt above, emphasizes that women are a source of happiness and prosperity. In other words, a woman is a *Kamadhuk* who is a source of happiness, well-being, and prosperity for the happiness of children, families, society, nation, and state. Contradicting the content of Hindu literature, women who should be protected, loved, and respected because they have an important function and role in a family are only treated as objects. All of this is represented in the female characters in the novel *Tempurung*. They do not have their bodies. Their lives are just machines, they have no right to be happy and ultimately end in sadness and death.

Oka Rusmini, as a woman with Balinese blood, understands that literature is born in society, and consumed by society, and therefore the relationship between literary works and the outside world must also be discussed. One of them is by featuring female figures who live in other countries, Rosa Carmelita character. The mother she called *Mami* married a man of *Batak* blood and then decided to move and live in France. Rosa always viewed the relationship between her mother and father as abnormal because her father was very busy with his world. Her father was a professor at a university in France, while her mother was also a career woman. There is a depiction of Indonesia as a Western country in the novel *Tempurung* by the author.

Namaku Rosa Carmelita. Aku lama hidup di Prancis. Aku asli Indonesia. Ibuku Perempuan Padang. Ayahku lelaki Batak. Aku hidup dengan cara-cara Indonesia. Makan nasi, juga sayur bening, dan sayur asam. Aku paling hobi makan teri goreng, ikan asin, dengan sambal terasi asli Indonesia. (Rusmini, 2010: 246).

My name is Rosa Carmelita. I lived in France for a long time. I am a native Indonesian. My mother is a Padang woman. My father is a Batak man. I live in Indonesian ways. Eat rice, clear vegetables, and sour vegetables. My hobby is eating fried anchovies, and salted fish, with authentic Indonesian shrimp paste chili sauce. (Rusmini, 2010: 246).

Outside of literature, what is meant here is a depiction of a culture that is very different from the traditions and customs of Bali. This certainly has a big influence on moral norms. Moreover, the depiction of Indonesian female characters living in France is freer in expression and does not live in suffering. The common thread is that Rosa's father's grandmother lived in Bali and lived in suffering. Of all the female characters in the text, the majority of them experience subordination. This of course contradicts the content of the roles and duties of wives in Hindu literature, who should be respected and loved because they have a very important role in realizing family happiness.

The female characters in the novel *Tempurung* have the same depiction as several female characters in novels that examine subordination and gender injustice as in three short stories by Saut Situmorang -*Barbara*, *Incest*, *Bah*-, *Nama* by NH. Dini, *Sintren* by Dianing Widya Yudhistira, *Gadis Pantai* by Zainul Muttaqin and *Kegelisahan Madu* by Evi Rahmawati. The inferiority experienced by female characters in the text relate to the function and role of women.

There is an understanding that women not only play roles as wives, mothers and housewives for the family, but also socially and culturally in a wider scope. However, when the roles of family members are dominantly controlled by men, women do not have a significant role in carrying out certain functions because they are already handled by men. One of them is the role of women who do not function in carrying out social functions as part of the community.

The depiction of female characters in the novel *Tempurung* is a mimesis of the social reality that exists in society, especially Balinese society. As stated by Plato, the novel *Tempurung* as one of the works of art - literary works - subordination, cultural repression, gender stereotypes, and repression caused by social repression experienced by the female characters are forms of imitation of human life, especially women in Bali. As literary criticism, this research serves as a reminder that the Balinese women represented by the female characters in the novel *Tempurung* are women who suffer, do not have their own body, and dream of becoming free humans. The burden of life that they bear as part of Balinese women's obligations towards their husbands, culture, and social environment depresses their souls so that they never feel that life is a gift from God.

CONCLUSION

In the novel *Tempurung*, Balinese women are depicted as experiencing intense subordination caused by cultural repression, namely patriarchy culture, gender stereotypes, and the social environment. Oka Rusmini's efforts to raise the issue of women's subordination to Balinese women are an effort to explain that behind the beauty of the dances, culture, and customs of the island of Bali there are sad stories experienced by Balinese women. Things that some people consider taboo to bring up because they think they could damage traditions and culture were loudly voiced by Oka Rusmini. Moreover, the author has Balinese blood, so the courage to speak out and write intensely about gender injustice, stereotypes, and traditional confines is to defend the fate of Balinese women.

Through the female characters in the novel, various issues of subordination and gender inequality are presented to provide an understanding that Balinese women also have the right to determine their fate and own their bodies. This research limits the discussion to three aspects, namely the issue of women's subordination, gender stereotypes, and the social environment in Bali which often makes female characters in novels powerless. Further research from novel *Tempurung* is to examine the role of male characters in the text in their capacity to help perpetuate the patriarchy system, gender stereotypes, and the social environment or also to fight against the systems and culture that exist in Balinese society.

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