

Balinese Hindu Women

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Abstract— *This article is the result of a study on the practice of a patriarchal system that sets Balinese Hindu women in a weak position. They are subordinated by the dominance and hegemony of masculinity habituated over a very long period of time. Habituation is carried out using various symbols of religion, rites, and mythology so that patriarchal culture can be embedded in collective memory of the Balinese. As a result, women receive stigmatization and cultural violence that they will never be equal to men as long as this system is still functioned in all areas of life. The long struggle of women against this injustice is based on, first, patriarchal system that grows as an epicenter in social structure of Balinese society. Second, marriage is a huge burden for women to give birth to a son, so that customary mechanism is sought to save patrilineal system in several ways. Third, there is a biased misinterpretation regarding the meaning of the word *suputra* who is constantly interpreted as a good boy. Fourth, women from Tri Wangsa class are not free to choose and accept men who will become their husband later. Conversely, Tri Wangsa men are relatively free to marry women from any class. These four reasons make stigma and cultural violence for women difficult to eliminate. The decision of the upper house of Hindu religion which provides equal position and inheritance rights between men and women has not changed this situation.*

Keywords— *Hindu women; patrilineal; patriarchy; stigma; cultural violence*

I. INTRODUCTION

multiple challenges in all aspects of life, even they tend to fight violence, both domestic violence [1] to state violence [2] [3]. Male hegemony is even considered a universal phenomenon in the history of human civilization [4]. The identical circumstance is further undergone by Hindu women in Bali. One dilemma that is deemed to be a hindrance to Hindu women in failing to rise in public spaces is the cultural structure that adheres to a patrilineal or patriarchal system by putting men or *purusha* as the main lineage [5] [6]. Even so, the comparable states seem to begin to afflict women although they are living with a strong matrilineal system. One of them is the community in Padang whose women's role is considered to be decreasing [7] [8].

The patriarchal system in Bali, particularly in rights and inheritance, is practiced rigidly with only men dominating social space to spiritual matters and placing women's positions only as subordinates [9] [10]. The current of modernization is not quite able to make women possess an influential bargaining status, notably those who are not highly educated [11]. Even women born in noble families have the same fate, primarily when they have to marry men who are not equal [12] [13] [14] [15] [16].

Thus, the patriarchal system that Galtung deems produces three violence at once, namely direct, structural, and cultural

violence [17] and represents masculine dominance [18] towards women. The stigma that women receive, not only concerning their bodies [19] but also culturally, religiously, and variously symbols [20]. Likewise, regarding human rights, uniquely in marriage [21]. For a long time, Hindu women in Bali struggled to fight against this stigma, even though they still had not found the results. In fact, as Jackson and Jones [22] remarked that in the future women will face harder issues, especially education, economic, and political issues

II. RESEARCH METHOD

To be able to explore the depths of marriage system and social structure, this research was carried out thoroughly so as not to enter sensitive areas. The approach used in this research is qualitative with observation techniques, interviews, and documentation studies. Through this interview the author wants to find new experiences and explain some of his opinions that depart from various events and activities, including how their position in the frame of social, economic, political and cultural, as Geertz [23], and also Spradley [24] believes that ethnographic-based anthropology research is to enrich the sensitivity of the researcher, including his experience and awareness of events experienced from the past and told in generations.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Position of Hindu Women: Status, Rights, and Marriage

The position of women who are lower than men not only occurs in domestic space but also in the public space. The equivalent matter arose in the theological space. Hindu women earned a lot of praise in the Vedic scriptures [25] but at the same time, they were regarded as opium for men, one of them in the *Sarasasmuscaya* scriptures which although in a few verses women were demeaned, it was later understood as a guide for spiritualists.

The ambivalent attitude that befell women has been going on for a long time, even afflicting tribal tribes [26]. The stigma suffered by Hindu women also plays in the realm of myth. For instance, the folklore of *Calon Arang* which was popular during the Kingdom of Kediri in the Twelfth Century has made Ratna Manggali shunned by men only because she was the daughter of Nateng Dirah who was thought to have black magic. Heraty [27] terms this story a form of gender discrimination. Likewise, when there are Balinese people being *leak* because of their black magic, they are always connoted to women [28].

The position of women is increasingly weak in status and inheritance rights which are only given to men [9] [10]. Women will only gain wealth obtained from the work of their parents. This gift is habitually provided when they are getting married. Therefore, the birth of a son in a family will be regarded as the savior of his father's social status so that he is assigned the burden to continue rituals, traditions, and customs both at home, extended family, and in society [29].

The amount of hope a family has for a son can be noticed from the customary mechanism used to save the patrilineal system, namely (1) if they only have daughters, then one of their children will be asked to stay at home or *nyentana* with her husband. Customarily, the woman will be changed to a "male" or *purusha* status and her husband will be "female" [30] [31]. Even though they are "male", women still have no capacity as leaders and decision makers. (2) if they only have a child, either a son or a daughter, they choose *padagelahang* marriage, so that their daughter remains a *purusha* in her own home [32] [33]. (3) if they have no descendants at all, they will appoint a son as *purusha* [34].

In terms of marriage, specifically, women who are considered as *Tri Wangsa*, namely three aristocratic groups which are hierarchically composed of *Brahmana*, *Ksatria*, and *Wesya*, they are not free to choose and accept men as their husband. On the contrary, men from the *Tri Wangsa* class are relatively free to marry women from the people or groups or social classes below them. If the *Tri Wangsa* woman is married to a man from their underclass, it will be called *nyerod*, that is, marriage goes down to the people. Therefore, when a *Tri Wangsa* woman married to a man from the *Jaba* or the lowest class, then it will be regarded as a great disgrace that tarnishes the honor of a large family [12].

B. Hindu Women and Cultural Violence

Cultural violence against Hindu women in Bali is accepted in multiple ways. There is a set of continuous socialization so that violence is immersed in the collective memory of the Balinese. Bourdieu [35] expresses this reality as a sort of habitus by adjusting the patriarchal system an arena for men to create common living standards that women must follow. As an illustration, the term *suputra* is only interpreted as a good boy, even though in the *Manawadharmasastra* scripture, this term is defined as a good child, does not refer to male or female gender. The change in *suputra* meaning was then habituated from generation to generation through mythology, for example, Sang Jaratkaru, a priest who had vowed not to marry for the rest of his life. When he died, the spirits of his parents were tortured in hell since Jaratkaru had no son. To free his parents from the torment of hell, Jaratkaru finally broke his vow and married Jaratkaru Dewi. This marriage gave birth to a son named Sang Astika.

The strong influence of Jaratkaru's mythology has put women under pressure when deciding to marry because they have to give birth to offspring, markedly sons. In the past, women who were unable to give birth will be called *Men Bekung*, a highly painful term because it is considered barren. She seemed to bear her own failure to continue the

offspring. Though, if a woman is able to give birth to many children, she will be called *Men Brayut* by surrounding people for she is definitely busy taking care of her children. Both of these calls are equally unpleasant since it confirms that women can be praised and insulted at the same time.

Cultural violence is not only encountered by women of *Tri Wangsa*, but also women of *Jaba*. Segara [12] in his research emphasized that if a *Tri Wangsa* woman does a *nyerod* marriage, she will be deemed out by her core family. When saying farewell to the *sanggah* or the family temple, she can only carry out worship from outside the refutation wall. When visiting her parents' home, she no longer got proper treatment, for instance sitting on par with her other family, not being called by a respectful call, and her nobility status was revoked through the *patiwangi* ceremony. Interestingly, this ceremony is held in the *Bale Agung* or *Pura Desa* which is ordinarily located in the middle of the village. The community seemed to be told that there was a *Tri Wangsa* woman whose status was lowered and her status was the same as a *Jaba* man who married her.

Furthermore, the Segara study [12] also revealed that when a *Jaba* woman married to a *Tri Wangsa* man, she also underwent the same violence, mainly when given a new name. Generally, *Jaba* women will be given the first name *Jero* then followed by the names of fragrant flowers, such as *Cempaka*, *Sandat (Kenanga)* or jasmine. The meaning of the word *Jero* is "inside" and it connotes holy. *Tri Wangsa* is a sacred class, while *Jaba* is those who live "outside" so that it is recognized dirty. *Jaba's* status was raised by presenting the name *Jero Melati* for example, so that when she entered the noble class she was not dirty anymore. This irony explicates that even in terms of sexuality, Balinese women have been hegemony in the national system [36].

C. Hindu Women Return to "Silent Path"

The weak position of Hindu women in Bali is not taken for granted, as is the discourse that is further expanding outside of itself. Arafat, which is reviewed by Aini [37] affirms explicitly that religion rejects patriarchy. Arifin [38] declares the need to read normative texts concerning women in Islam so as not to be gender biased, and Syufri [1] encourages to realize that there has been a misleading thought of religious teachings and the beliefs as well as imitation of a boy towards his father's character which he contemplated to be the imperative factor generating violence.

The difficulty presently is the burden of women breaking into the patriarchal system in Bali for the chances of women appearing in public spaces seem to be closed, as Farida [39] asserts that the world still considers politics and leadership as male domains. Public areas are not quite friendly for women so they must be involved in playing the dramaturgy strategy [40]. Yet, in the end, women have to conceive various adjustments for their survival [41]. For instance, Oka Rusmini in Bali expressed her struggle in her two famous novels, "Tarian Bumi" and "Kenanga". The struggle to uphold equality was further voiced by other women [42]. The most phenomenal one is the struggle of the Hindu Dharma Indonesia Women's organization along with the Main Assembly of the Pakraman Village which

succeeded in pushing the Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia when holding the Pesamuhan Agung III in 2010 by issuing a decree or *bhisama* or fatwa that Hindu women were authorized to inheritance rights.

Although there have been *bhisama* from the highest assembly of the Hindu religion, yet the decision remains difficult to carry out openly. Changes in the era, modernization in all fields, and inclusive global ethics are not sufficient to assist women to get out of the subordinate position of the patriarchal system. They experience fatalist symptoms and can only perform changes individually. Efforts to develop self-capacity through careers, established work, and higher education are only used as economic capital and intellectual capital to anticipate tough circumstances. For example, if a woman is left behind by her husband, even though she can still live in her husband's family house, she will become the backbone of raising her children. If she divorced and returned to her own parents' house, she could continue her own life.

For her struggles in getting out of the patriarchal shell, women eventually returned to the "silent path". Hindu women can hardly reminisce by recollecting the sweet romance of the history of their glorious past predecessors. The shadow of the past becomes an encouragement for women by retaining that during the Hindu orthodox tradition as explained by Sarwanukramanika in Segara [43], there were at least 20 great women who had excellent intuition as Maha Rsi. They are believed to have played a role in compiling the Rigveda. Some of the prominent women were Lopamudra, Wisawara, Sikata Niwawari, and Gosha who compiled the rigs of the Rigveda I. 179, V. 28, III. 91, IX.81. 11-20 and X. 39-40. Other ancient female figures, such as Sulabha Maitreyi, Wadawa Prathiteyi, and Gargi Wachaknawi, are still receiving great respect from writers and scholars.

IV. CONCLUSION

The ambivalence of views on women has exposed weakness and fear of men who desire to recapitulate to control the entire space of life. Men seem jealous of something unique and special that lasts only in women. The practice of the patriarchal system has invented life to be hard and masculine. The language of religion and the personification of God are too "male", although at the same time there is a belief that the Gods in Hinduism will not be able to perform Their functions properly if They are not accompanied by their wives, like God Brahma will not be able to create if there is no Goddess Saraswati or God Wisnu cannot maintain the universe if it is not accompanied by Goddess Sri. To mediate, the concept of divinity in Hinduism was designed symbolically with *Ardhanareswari*, i.e. God is "not male" and "not female".

The powerful impact of the patriarchal system has yielded acute stigmatization to women who cannot just be cleaned up even when they are living in a post-modern era. The exertion to escape the shadow of masculinity has been progressing on for a long time and still, there is a stigma resulted from masculine domination seems to make men and women in opposition. With a patriarchal system, men will invariably be reluctant to be positioned lower than women

for even if they are in an equal position they will not desire to be as long as the structure of Balinese culture is built on patrilineal foundations.

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