

## Discourse on Violence Against Balinese Women in the Novel “Sukreni Gadis Bali”: A Literary Anthropological Study



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**ABSTRACT:** This article aims to examine the discourse of violence against Balinese women in the novel *Sukreni Gadis Bali* based on a study of literary anthropology. This study uses a qualitative method with a critical discourse analysis approach. Sukreni represents Balinese women who continuously experience violence in their lives due to the power of patriarchal culture. He became a victim of parental divorce. Her identity was toyed with by her father to fulfil his ego. She became a victim of trafficking in women and sexual violence. From a feminist perspective, the novel *Sukreni Gadis Bali* shows the author's criticism of the discourse on violence against Balinese women due to patriarchal culture.

**KEYWORDS:** discourse, violence, women, literary anthropology

### INTRODUCTION

The novel *Sukreni Gadis Bali* is a work by Anak Agung Panji Tisna, which was first published in 1936. This novel is quite popular among activists and critics of Indonesian literature. His position can be compared to other popular novels, such as *Layar Terkembang* by Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, *Kasih Tak Sampai* by Marah Rulsli, or *Di Atas Sebuah Kapal* by N.H. Dini. Even the novel *Sukreni Gadis Bali* has been translated into English under the title *The Rape of Sukreni* by George Quinn (1998).

The popularity of these works is of course not only due to their beautiful and interesting stories, but also because of the ideological discourse they construct. This is in line with Williams' view (Faruk, 2003) that literature can be a social, political, and cultural force that enables the birth of a movement against injustice. Modern fiction is often present to carry out social criticism of various practices of deviation from the dominant culture, as well as being a mouthpiece for the marginalized to fight injustice. Therefore, it must be acknowledged that the study of modern fiction has played an important role in cultural analysis (Storey, 2007). In other words, modern literary works reflect an impressive blend of narrative, aesthetic value, and cultural emancipation.

Violence against women is one of the important discourses in the novel *Sukreni Gadis Bali*. Anthropologically, this novel describes the reality of violence that Balinese women often face in their socio-cultural life. The prevailing patriarchal culture in Bali has subordinated Balinese women in inheritance rights and various social practices (Dyatmikawati, 2013). Patriarchal culture also limits the role and participation of Balinese women in decision-making in the public sphere, especially in the field of customs (Rhoads, 2013). In a different context, Balinese women also often experience physical and symbolic violence. How the reality of violence against Balinese women due to patriarchal culture is discussed in the novel *Sukreni Gadis Bali* is an important focus of this article.

### METHODS

This research was conducted in a qualitative method with a critical discourse analysis approach. According to Eriyanto (2001), critical discourse analysis based on five principles, as follows: (a) *the principle of action* that discourse is built based on a purpose, whether influencing, inviting, and persuading, consciously by its creator; (b) *the principle of context* that discourse is always built in a certain context by involving text (language), context (setting, situation, subject to be influenced), and discourse (relationship of text and context); (c) *the historical principle* that discourse is built in a certain historical context or time dimension; (d) *the principle of power* that discourse is built as a means of controlling power so that discourse is not neutral or natural; and (e) *the ideological principle* that discourse is a form, practice, or ideological representation to capture public awareness so that it seems natural and appropriate, taken for granted.

The main data source for this research is the novel *Sukreni Gadis Bali* in the Indonesian edition (1936) by Anak Agung Panji Tisna. Data analysis through critical interpretation methods, namely uncovering the meaning of text, context (setting, events, conditions, situations referred to by the text), and discourse (relationships of text and context). Holistic analysis of critical discourse by outlining the principles of action, context, history, power, and ideology involved in the novel. In this study, the relations of power and ideology that cause violence against Balinese women are the most important focus of analysis.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Literary anthropology is the analysis and understanding of literary works in relation to culture. Literary work is not a reflection, isn't it simply reflects reality, rather it refracts, and deflects it so it succeeds in evoking more cultural diversity meaning. In this connection it will happen reciprocal process, the balance of which dynamic between the strengths of literary aspects with anthropology. In fact, in analysis the good, as if unrecognizable whether what is being discussed includes in literary anthropology. The anthropological aspect covers the whole works at once show that literary anthropology is a model very important approach, including in the analysis of modern fiction such as the novel (Ratna, 2011).

Modern fiction can no longer be understood solely as a narcotic that can only make its readers addicted, but also offers enlightenment (Storey, 2007). Enlightenment can be obtained by dismantling the ideological discourse contained therein. This led Louis Althusser to the concept of "problematic", namely the theoretical and ideological structures that compose and produce discourses that crisscross and organize in an organized manner in a text. In other words, the text itself is problematic. However, at the same time the text also encourages the birth of answers (Storey, 2007). Literary texts contain various kinds of problems and at the same time the answers, either explicitly or implicitly.

Everything written in the text builds a narrative structure, such as theme, character, plot, and setting. Everything that is implied is the structure of the meaning of the text. The narrative structure plays a more descriptive function, namely the depiction of the story as it is to arouse the aesthetic instincts of the reader, even giving a narcotic touch. The structure of meaning plays a more transformative function, namely revealing criticism, discourse, ideology, and messages that enable enlightenment to emerge (Sugiharto, 1996). In the realm of culture studies, the narrative strength of a literary work is more metaphorical. That is, the superiority of narrative lies in its sensitivity in playing up ideological discourses that develop in society. Literary work is seen as a unit of discourse and its reference is the "world" that is displayed. Interpreting a literary work means displaying the 'world' that the work refers to, through the form of arrangement, genre (typical codification) and style of writing (Sugiharto, 1996). Thus, the analysis of works of fiction must be directed at uncovering narrative structures and metaphors that interweaves to build the overall meaning of the text.

Literary works can be understood in accordance with sign conventions as the main study in semiotic analysis. In semiotics, everything can be solved as language. Language is principally a tool based on social conventions. In daily practice, language cannot be separated from certain meaning systems used to show a reality. According to Saussure, language (*langue*) is a *lexicon of signification* (Sturrock, 2007). Language is not just words, but a universe of signs. Signs form codes that support language functions (Sturrock, 2007). So, semiotics is an extension of the term linguistics which positions language as a sign system (Audifax, 2007). Literary work is a second-level semiotic system (Segers, 2000; Pradopo, 2003), because literary works with their signifiers such as metaphors, connotations, and other double marking characteristics are not ordinary language, but a communication system that is loaded with cultural messages (Ratna, 2004).

With regard to this opinion, the analysis of secondary language, namely connotation and metaphor is the main basis for capturing the message of a literary work. Metaphor is a language game that doesn't really explain what is written. The meaning of the metaphor overcomes itself and leads to something that it does not say (Sugiharto, 1995). Connotation and metaphor are types of language that do not have a single meaning, so Derrida (Al-Fayyadl, 2005) states that meaning is always different, like a ghost playing between existence and non-existence; its existence is its absence, and its absence is its existence. Difference overshadows every text with other possibilities that offer surprises, are unexpected, and are quite disturbing because it seems as if the text has lost its meaning.

According to Althusser (Storey, 2007), the reading of works of fiction offers a symptomatic method or text deconstruction. The symptomatic method means uncovering problematic mechanisms, namely change, distortion, silence, and absence (symptoms) and thereby constructing the historical conditions of existence (Storey, 2007). Deconstruction is a strategy of parsing text. The term "de-construction" is actually closer to the etymology of the word "analysis" which means to unravel, release, open (Al-Fayyadl, 2005; Audifax, 2007). This etymological closeness shows that deconstruction is narrower as a strategy to break down the structure and field of meaning of the text, rather than an operation to destroy the text itself. Therefore, if a text is built, meaning is not destroyed. However, the claim that – a form of textual meaning is more correct than other different meanings – this is what is deconstructed (Al-Fayyadl, 2005:80). In essence, deconstruction rejects the view of the singularity of meaning in a text and instead, upholds difference.

This reading method has been applied by Pierre Macherey in his book *A Theory of Literary Production* (1978). Macherey firmly rejects the term "interpretative error", because no text has a single meaning. For Macherey, text is not a puzzle that hides meaning, but a construction of various meanings (Storey, 2007). This is in line with Derrida's outline which takes issue again with the philosophical claim that a text has a univocal meaning and does not include the slightest ambiguity in it. Deconstruction sues the offered mode of meaning and tends to be unanimous, as the text might want. In deconstruction, meaning is more of a process of excavation and not a result that has been made and can be enjoyed for granted. Meaning is behind the scenes, but its form is not presence, but rather a process of becoming which continuously overrides the meaning that is felt to be sufficient and replaces it with new markers that are more open and ambiguous (Al-Fayyadl, 2005). Based on this theoretical framework, the novel *Sukreni Gadis*

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*Bali* is seen as a narrative that contains so many problems that it deserves to be described and explained, including in the context of violence against Bali.

### **RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **Story synopsis**

This novel begins with a story about Men Negara, a shop owner in the village of Bingin Banyah, a coconut plantation area in the Singaraja District. The real Men Negara is a woman from Karangasem who left her husband and children because she followed another man. Together with the man she was having an affair with, Men Negara had two children, namely I Negara and Ni Negari. Meanwhile, from her previous husband, she also has a daughter named Ni Widi. Apparently, it was this mother's departure that started the tragic chapter of Ni Widi's life. Not only because he has to live life without a mother's love, but also that will this mother later become the actor causing the destruction of his life.

Told further, the Men Negara food stall is quite busy with customers. The customers also vary, ranging from coconut plantation workers, police, to community leaders. The rapid development of the Men Negara store is because he managed to take advantage of the beauty of Ni Negari's daughter to attract buyers, even from outside the village. In fact, Ni Negari was also successfully used as bait to win the heart of a National Police Chief named Gusti Made Tusan so that various law-breaking practices committed by Men Negara could be pardoned. As a result, Men Negara really enjoy their better economic life and in still material traits in their lives.

The climax of the story begins when Sukreni arrives at Bingin Banyah Village. Sukreni is actually Ni Widi, the daughter of Men Negara who she left when she was eight years old. Sukreni's father has changed Ni Widi's name to Ni Luh Sukreni. With the intention that Sukreni could no longer recognize and be recognized by his mother. The purpose of Sukreni's visit to Bingin Banyah village was to meet Ida Suamba to ask for opinions and solutions to the inheritance case that occurred in her hometown. The first meeting with Ida Gde Suamba did not get a solution so Sukreni came back at a later date. On her second visit, Ida Gde Suamba was out of the area so Sukreni decided to rest at the Men Negara's house. In fact, this is the meeting of mother and son, but the two do not recognize each other.

Sukreni's presence at the Men Negara stall has attracted the attention of its customers, including Gusti Made Tusan. Sukreni's beauty has aroused Gusti Made Tusan's sexual desire to get her. Tit for tat, Men Negara's glasses material immediately noticed a new "commodity" worth selling, namely Sukreni. In short, the strategy was arranged by Men Negara to fulfill Gusti Made Tusan's request. While Sukreni was at home alone, Men Negara went with her children, thereby giving Gusti Made Tusan the opportunity to rape Sukreni. Until the next day, when the Men Negara's heart was so happy because they got abundant money from "selling" Sukreni, I Negara also came with good news. News that Sukreni is her half-sister, daughter of Men Negara who she abandoned when she was a baby. Hearing this news, Men Negara expressed her endless regret. He felt very guilty because he had the heart to sell his own child just to fulfil his greed.

After that incident, Sukreni had left Men Negara's house early in the morning. He wandered aimlessly with a baby seed in his stomach. Until finally a kind hearted person accepted her, cared for her womb, until a baby boy was born from her womb. The baby was named Gustam. He grew up to be a mighty man, but unfortunately his soul was a delinquent. Gustam grew up to become a well-respected gang of robbers in the Singaraja area. Until one day, the Men Negara stall became the target of his action. The robbery was carried out, even the Men Negara stall was burnt down by Gustam and his friends. However, at the same time, Gusti Made Tusan sang the song of the police chief who was there on a security patrol. Until finally the fight between the robbers and the police was inevitable.

The fights became more and more exciting and casualties fell on both sides. In the end, Gusti Made Tusan, the chief of police, is now facing one on one with Gustam, the head of the robbers. Children and fathers who don't know each other, fight with weapons drawn in their hands. Gusti Made Tusan's bullet penetrated Gustam's chest, and Gustam also managed to slash his father's neck. This father and son died, before they had time to realize who they were killing each other with. This place has become a silent witness to the destruction of the Balinese Girl Sukreni. It was there that Sukreni was sold by her own mother and it was also in this place that the rapist and her child died together.

#### **Discourse on violence against Balinese women**

The discourse on violence against Balinese women in the novel *Sukreni Gadis Bali* can be seen in the change of name "Ni Widi" to "Sukreni". It is said that because "Sukreni" has removed the identity of "Ni Widi", even though these two identities refer to the same subject. However, the identity of this subject has been constructed differently in the social world. Ni Widi refers to the identity of a child who has a mother, while Sukreni is the identity of a child without a mother. Sukreni must accept her social destiny, grow and develop without the presence of a mother. "Little Sukreni" is a symbol that humans who are without awareness of identity will simply accept that their identity is played by other actors.

The actor behind Ni Widi's change of identity is his own father. The goal was that Ni Widi would no longer be known and recognized by his mother, namely Men Widi. Widi's man reportedly ran away from home because he followed another man who was not his husband. In short, Men Widi had the heart to leave her husband and child for the man she was having an affair with.

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Morally, a mother who has an affair and dares to leave her child and family is branded as a bad mother so that her own child does not deserve it. Mothers like this should be completely erased from the family's memory because they are considered a disgrace. Even so, Pan Widi was not aware that what he was doing was actually the source of the violence faced by Sukreni.

Symbolic violence has been experienced by Sukreni since her childhood. He was not given the space and opportunity at all by his father to recognize who his mother was. The symbol that in a patriarchal society the father holds the main control in family decision making. Father's hegemony and domination have determined Sukreni's social destiny, so he must accept the status of a child without a mother. Unknowingly, this symbolic violence painted a dark color in Sukreni's later life. If only Sukreni was given the freedom to recognize her mother, no matter how evil she is, maybe Sukreni's meeting with the Men Negara would be a happy meeting. Not the other way around, instead it became the cause of Sukreni's suffering.

The violence experienced by Sukreni cannot be separated from the domination of male power over women as a representation of patriarchal culture. Patriarchal ideology is an ideology that emphasizes that men are superior to women, that women must be controlled by men, and that women belong to men (Bashin, 1994). Adian (2006) also stated that patriarchal ideology is an idea that places men in a dominant position and women in a subordinate position. Closely related to this patriarchal ideology are the ideology of gender and the ideology of sex. Hegemony of patriarchal culture in Balinese society be an important discourses ini the *Sukreni Gadis Bali*.

This can be seen from the story of Ni Negari, the beautiful daughter of Men Negara's daughter. She has become her mother's tool to captivate customers with her beauty and gentleness. In fact, this novel tells that almost all of Men Negara's customers are men. At least, there are two problems that can be read from this social text, namely not knowing that there are women who like to come to Men Negara stalls and men's attraction to Ni Negari. With the perspective of patriarchal ideological hegemony, these problems can be explained as follows.

Patriarchal ideology tends to place male dominance over women in the socio-economic field. It is proven that the customers of the Men Negara stall are men consisting of various professions, such as coconut plantation workers, police officers, and community leaders. Meanwhile, women played more domestic roles. In this difference in roles, the culture of eating and drinking in stalls tends to belong to men because they have the economic capital to do so. This culture is strengthened by a moral stigma that tends to prohibit women from hanging out in stalls. This confirms Bashin's (1994) view that religion (as well as morality) plays an important role in creating and perpetuating patriarchal ideology.

In this case, patriarchal ideology becomes the playing field for cultural capital and economic capital within the framework of acute capitalism. Patriarchal culture tends to encourage men's desires to make women's bodies their sensual and sexual objects. As stated by Piliang (2004) that the female body in the discourse of capitalism produces use value, exchange value, and sign value so that it becomes a central part of capitalism politics, with all the principles and laws the law. In this context, the body of Ni Negara was successfully utilized by the Men Negara as economic capital to realize their interests in obtaining abundant material. Likewise when the Men Negara got Sukreni as a new commodity worth selling. Moreover, the presence of Sukreni has indeed attracted and aroused Gusti Made Tusan's sense of manliness to have him. Sukreni even had to accept the more severe consequences of the commodification of bodies carried out by the Men Negara, namely experiencing rape.

## CONCLUSION

*Sukreni Gadis Bali* is a literary work of tragedy in the life of the Balinese people. This can be understood from the core of the story which outlines the tragic story of Sukreni. Enjoying a childhood without a mother, being sold by her own mother, being raped, and having delinquent children color Sukreni's life. Apart from that, the chronicles of violence color the entire series of stories, both symbolic and physical. Therefore, the violent side of the Balinese is the reality that this novel seeks to reveal. This finding is not only intended to dismantle the meaning of the novel *Sukreni Girl Bali*, but furthermore can be used as a reflection in managing contemporary life. Because of that, Balinese Girl Sukreni becomes an enlightenment discourse for today's Balinese to organize their identity which is never final.

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