

# WOMEN UNDER THE SOVEREIGNTY OF MARRIAGE IN OKA RUSMINI 'S SHORT STORY “KETIKA PERKAWINAN HARUS DIMULAI” : FEMINIST - MARXIST CRITICISM

**Sih Mangesthi Pamardiningtyas**  
Magister Kajian Sastra dan Budaya  
Universitas Airlangga  
[smpamardiningtyas@gmail.com](mailto:smpamardiningtyas@gmail.com)

**Abstrak.** Artikel ini membahas cerita pendek karya Oka Rusmini berjudul *Ketika Perkawinan Harus Dimulai*, dengan menggunakan teori kritik feminis-Marxis untuk mengidentifikasi penggambaran karakter perempuan yang terkait dengan konflik kelas Karl Marx dan alienasi. Pembahasan ini bertujuan untuk mengungkapkan bahwa subordinasi perempuan adalah hasil dari hubungan sosial, dan bahwa upaya laki-laki untuk mencapai tuntutan mereka untuk berkuasa dalam pengendalian tenaga kerja perempuan dan kemampuan seksual telah disampaikan melalui karya sastra. Artikel ini menunjukkan bahwa tokoh utama dalam cerita ini berjuang untuk mempertahankan komitmennya membuktikan bahwa wanita dapat hidup untuk dirinya sendiri tanpa dikendalikan oleh orang lain. Oleh karena itu, *Ketika Perkawinan Harus Dimulai* adalah kritik terhadap ideologi patriarkal dan penindasan terhadap perempuan.

Kata Kunci: feminisme, feminis-marxis, patriarki, perkawinan

**Abstract.** This paper discusses Oka Rusmini's short story entitled *Ketika Perkawinan Harus Dimulai*, by utilizing theory of Feminist - Marxist criticism to identify the portrayal of female characters related to Karl Marx's class conflict and alienation. The discussion aimed to reveal that woman subordination is the result of social relations, and that men's efforts to achieve their demands for control of women's labor and sexual faculties have been delivered in the literary work. The analysis showed that the main character in the story struggled in her life in holding on to her commitment to prove that women can live for herself without being controlled by others. Therefore, *Ketika Perkawinan Harus Dimulai* is a critique towards patriarchal ideology and oppression towards women.

Key words: feminism, feminist - marxist, patriarchy, marriage

## INTRODUCTION

Women are often treated like an object and considered lower than men. Male domination towards women that is considered as a truth in Indonesia represents the system where men have power and control in all aspects, especially to women, Patriarchy. All the aspects of women are in the area of male domination, from body, sexuality, to the role and existence of women both in education and work. Along with the system, an ideology emerged that men have a higher position than women, men are responsible of women therefore men have special rights to regulate women; that women must be controlled by men, and are part of the property of men (Saadawi, 2001). This is the reason behind the norms and laws in the establishment that are double standards that tend to give rights to men rather than women.

Patriarchy that develops in society is hard to eliminate because it has become a hereditary culture. Women's jobs are always associated with nurturing, while men are always associated with work. Men have power to conquer, expand and become aggressive. Physical differences received from birth are then strengthened by the hegemony of cultural structures, customs, traditions, educations and so on. Furthermore, it can be concluded that patriarchy emphasizes the power of fathers and/ or husbands in matters that dominate, subordinate and discriminate against women; are the dominance of parents, especially fathers, to children, dominance of husbands over wives, admiration of virginity, differences in male and female stereotypes, pressure on women's sexuality and reproductive functions. In these cases, men get a more dominant position and a role that does not see women as those who have their own decisions (Bhasin, 1996).

It is the injustice that has finally encouraged several feminist movements in Indonesia that have led Indonesian women to demand gender equality. This struggle is

not carried out with aspirational and physical movements, but also with some criticisms delivered through literary works. One of the literary works that conveys feminist criticism of patriarchal culture is some short stories that is incorporated in the collection book of short stories by Oka Rusmini, *Sagra*.

Oka Rusmini is a female writer who often expresses her criticism of the patriarchal system, and even the criticism is specifically for the oppression of women in her own home region, Bali. One of her short stories *Ketika Perkawinan Harus Dimulai* tells about a Balinese woman named Dayu Bulan who is thirty years old and has not married yet. The questions from the people around her made Dayu Bulan felt uncomfortable and questioned why women should marry.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The short story *Ketika Perkawinan Harus Dimulai* will be analyzed using the Criticism of Feminist – Marxist Literature Approach which believes that oppression of women is the effect of class division in society. The suppression of women is believed to be a product of social, political and economic structures (Vogel, 2013). Women are placed in the domestic realm, while men are in the public domain where men have the opportunity to become economically productive. Then, women are placed in positions that depend on the income of men economically so that the domination of women is realized.

By using Feminist – Marxist Literary Criticism, this article examines the relationship between female and male characters in the story and the relationship between female leaders and the surrounding people, along to the struggles of female character in the story to maintain the choice of her own life.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Women and Marriage in Balinese Society

Feminist – Marxist Criticism identifies the placement of women in the proletarian and men in the bourgeois position because men work in the public domain and produce material while women work in the domestic realm, at home, without income in the form of material (Engels, 1884). This makes women in a position without ownership rights.

As well as the role of women in Balinese social life, women are placed under male domination. Men become trusted parties in taking important decisions. Men in Balinese society get more rights than women, in terms of child ownership, for example, every child is under the ownership rights of father. In economic terms, boys have the rights to receive inheritance from their parents, while girls do not have the rights to the inheritance.

Likewise, in the marital law in Bali. Balinese people have the Purusa Perdana concept where Purusa is defined as the concept of soul which is a symbol of immortality, which is then equated with men, while Predana is defined as the concept of the material that is identified with impermanence and women (Rahmawati, 2015). This is the concept behind the gender inequality of men and women in marital customs in Bali. Balinese women who are married will become the property of her husband and her husband's family in full.

### B. Women as Proletarian Classes and Women Alienation

In the short story, *Ketika Perkawinan Harus Dimulai*, Oka Rusmini presents several female figures who are under male domination. One of them is the story of Putu Sudarmi, a Balinese female writer

whose novel always displays great energy in portraying Balinese women through narration. The female lecturer who teaches in the Dayu Bulan class said that Putu Sudarmi had been barren of creativity in writing literature as a result of marriage.

“Konon perkawinannya bermasalah. Suaminya sering tidak mengerti kesulitan-kesulitan yang dihadapinya. Sering kali, tumpukan kertas di ruang kerjanya dibuang begitu saja. Dianggap sampah! Padahal kertas-kertas itu adalah karya kreatifnya” (Rusmini, 2013, pp. 122)

Putu Sudarmi is positioned as a woman who is oppressed by the man in her marriage. Women are considered to have no intellect like men and the work of women is often considered trivial so Putu Sudarmi's husband easily threw the work away like garbage.

Dayu Bulan also received the same treatment from a male colleague who was also a poet, who was married but still often had sex with other women. When Dayu Bulan asked about how the man understood the value of marriage, he answered in a condescending tone,

“Itulah. Itu sulitnya berbicara dengan seorang perempuan. Apalagi yang belum kawin. Sulit !”  
“Kau tidak mengerti dunia kami. Perempuan tak akan pernah memahami petualangan kami. Ini peradaban laki-laki” (Rusmini, 2013, pp. 124)

The sentence describes how women are considered to have lower thinking ability than men and how women are positioned as trivial second sex existence so that women's position is only a part of male adventure and civilization. It is also the result of how men are placed in the public sphere and women are restricted in the domestic sphere that

brings women to the exile or alienation.

In the short story, *Ketika Perkawinan Harus Dimulai*, women are told as parties who are excluded from their production, this is seen in the story of Putu Sudarmi. Putu Sudarmi, who is a professional novelist, must experience isolation from her creativity when her husband threw away the papers she wrote. Writing a manuscript is not a trivial job, it requires the ability to think, broad insight and time. One writer certainly went through so many things in the long process of writing her work, but with such ease, Putu Sudarmi's husband treated her work like garbage. Women are underestimated alongside the work and the results of their thinking, which according to the researchers is due to men's fear of what women can do without being limited by male domination.

In addition to the seclusion of her work, the woman in this story also suffered exile from her activities, women are required to do something rather than doing it for themselves. Marriage is one of the demanded activities of women, women must face the compulsion to marry, although in reality marriage does not always give happiness and well-being. In this story, some women marry because of demands from parents, family, relatives or even as the demands of a society that was already formed in social construction in Bali. Women who choose not to marry is considered then, incapable of caring for themselves, have the trauma of the past about boys or even considered experiencing mental disruption.

Told in the short story is that the lecturer of Dayu Bulan is an independent woman who did not consider marriage as a must, however she eventually remained married at the request of her parents especially her mother.

“Perkawinan bukan target penting bagiku. Tapi Ibu...Ibuku selalu mendesakku kawin. Katanya, dia ingin

menimang anak yang kulahirkan sendiri. Kalau bukan karena Ibu, aku tidak akan kawin” tambah perempuan dosen itu sungguh-sungguh.  
(Rusmini, 2013, pp. 122)

From the statement of the lecturer above, women are so limited in their activities that they are urged to do activities that are not really the main purpose of their lives. Women are required to fulfill the interests of others through the marriages they live.

Women also experience alienation from their social qualities as humans, women are treated as goods so that they are tightly controlled by other human beings and nature so that their potentials can be minimized.

In *Ketika Perkawinan Harus Dimulai*, a wife of a male poet who often had sexual relations with other women was told to maintain his creativity in work. The wife had a thought that was formed from how the role of women was formed in social construction that alienates women from their quality as the whole and self-possessed human being, whereas women are considered as complementary and part of the life of men.

“Kau boleh bersetubuh dengan Semua perempuan di bumi ini, tapi jangan kau bawa pulang selir-selirmu itu. Dalam sejarah, seorang ratu selalu sendiri. Tak ada ratu kedua atau ketiga dalam sebuah periode kepemimpinan”  
(Rusmini, 2013, pp. 125)

From the words of the wife, it appears how women are formed into parties who consider it's natural that she and other women only become a complement in men's lives. Women are increasingly distant from the quality of themselves as human beings who have selfness and become the main ones in their own lives, but women are placed as objects that complement the

selfhood of a man.

The statement of the poet's wife is also a picture of the fourth exile of the four exiles of the proletariat according to Karl Marx, namely exile from friendship in the hope that every woman will have a sense of competition against other women so that it will benefit the man.

### C. Female Figure As Bourgeois Villagers: The Form of Women's Resistance

In *Ketika Perkawinan Harus Dimulai*, the main female figure, Dayu Bulan, is described as a Balinese woman who is critical of the traditions and class systems in Bali which she considers as a form of oppression against women. Bulan is also a dominant woman and in charge in determining decisions in her life. She was unmarried and had no plans to get married even though she was thirty years old, that's the ages at which parents and families began to ask questions about marriage and age where the society began to make assumptions until judgment which led to the term Old Virgin.

Dayu Bulan did not oppose marriage, she only questioned critically, why marriage was so glorified and required especially for women, unmarried women would be faced with the assumption that she would not be happy and not prosperous. In this short story, Bulan is faced with the realities of marriage that are not in accordance with the assumption of marriage bringing happiness and prosperity to women.

Konon, ia menuntut perempuan yang akan dinikahnya harus seorang perawan . . . Sementara dia tetap bersetubuh dengan perempuan-perempuan yang mengaguminya. Tetap merasa bahwa itu bukanlah sebuah dosa, . . .  
(Rusmini, 2013, pp. 124)

Dayu Bulan heard this statement from

a colleague who was a male poet. From this statement, Bulan was not sure that being a wife of a man like that is happiness for a woman. This short story opens the contrasting reality between marriage required for women to achieve happiness, but it is often precisely in marriage that women are unhappy.

Likewise, the story of the best friend of Bulan, Torita, who was married but began to feel unhappy, made contact with other men. From the story of her best friend, Bulan again asked about the importance of marriage. This short story once again shows the reader how women are formed to think that marriage is done for women's happiness and that women who are not married to men will get misfortune in their lives.

The concept is strengthened in Balinese culture which is thick with the oppression and injustice to women. In this short story, Dayu Bulan recalled the two paintings she had seen a few years ago, the two paintings were Kamasan-style paintings and told about the destiny of women. The first painting showed a picture of a woman whose nipples were being sucked by a caterpillar, this painting represented the thinking of parents that women who do not have children will get punishment when they die later, the punishment was a caterpillar that would suck their nipples and drink their milk. Whereas the second painting depicted a naked woman who was chased by a male pig who stared at her with a greedy look. The painting confirmed that the destiny of an unmarried woman would be punished after she died, she would continue to be chased by a male pig who wanted to enjoy her body (Rusmini, 2013). Dayu Bulan was so opposed to such myths and beliefs.

Benarkah sederhana itu Hyang  
Widhi menerjemahkan peran-peran  
yang diberikan kepada manusia?  
Semudah itukah menghukum pemain  
yang memerankan tokoh perempuan?  
Tanpa memikirkan alasan-alasan

mereka bersikukuh dengan pilihan hidupnya. Alangkah jahatnya Hyang Widhi jika Ia hanya memihak lelaki. (Rusmini, 2013, pp. 131)

Bulan thought of her mother's message that women who were not married would always be allowed to deliver offerings at each Pelinggih, a holy place. Unmarried women would actually be able to go up high and see the universe from above, while caterpillars and pigs in the painting couldn't.

The thoughts conveyed through the message of Mrs. Dayu Bulan was reaffirmed through this short story that women are restricted and required to marry, have husbands and children, to later work in the domestic realm to take care of the house, husband and care for children because women actually have the potential to be at the top supreme universe.

## CONCLUSION

The division of classes in the Capitalist system of society, according to Karl Marx, will lead to conflicts between classes - the bourgeois class (capitalists) and the proletariat class (workers). The predicted conflicts are expected to produce a system of society that is no longer divided into classes so that everyone will be in an equal position and have the same obligations and rights. This also occurs in gender-based class differentiation - men and women - formed in the patriarchal system. The oppression of women and the domination of men triggered a conflict between the two, so that movements which fought for gender equality were born, including Feminism.

In *Ketika Perkawinan harus Dimulai* from Oka Rusmini's book of short stories, this resistance is expressed through the depiction of women as oppressed proletarians both physically and culturally and women as independent bourgeois and holding a commitment to determine and make their own decisions in their own lives. Through

this short story Oka Rusmini, as a Balinese female writer, conveyed her criticism through literary work on the class division in the life of Balinese people which certainly felt so powerful in limiting and exiling women from aspects in their lives as human beings who (should) have the right to determine her own life.

## REFERENCES

- Barker, C. 2005. *Cultural Studies (terj. KUNCI Cultural Studies Center)*. Yogyakarta: Bentang.
- Bhasin, Kamla. 1996. *Menggugat Patriarki "What is Patriarchy", diterjemahkan oleh Nug Katjasungkana*. Yogyakarta: Yayasan Bentang Budaya.
- de Beauvoir, S. 1949. *The Second Sex (e-Book)*, Vintage Books. Available at: [https://uberty.org/wpcontent/uploads/2015/09/1949\\_simone-de-beauvoir-the-second-sex.pdf](https://uberty.org/wpcontent/uploads/2015/09/1949_simone-de-beauvoir-the-second-sex.pdf).
- Engels, F. 1884. *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Online, 118. <https://doi.org/10.1152/ajpcell.0303.2005>. Hottingen-Zurich. pdf.
- Lavine, T.Z. 2003. *Marx: Konflik Kelas dan Orang yang Terasing (diterjemahkan oleh Andi Iswanto dan Deddy A. Utama)*. Yogyakarta: Jendela. Pdf.
- Rahmawati, Ni Nyoman. (2015). Perempuan Bali dalam Pergulatan Gender (Kajian Budaya, Tradisi, dan Agama Hindu). *Jurnal Studi Kultural Volume 1 No. 1, Januari 2016*. Denpasar: An1mage.
- Rusmini, Oka. (2013). *Sagra*. Jakarta: PT

Grasindo, Anggota Ikapi.

Saadawi, Nawal El. 2001. *Perempuan dalam Budaya Patriarki "The Hidden Face of Eve"*, diterjemahkan oleh Zuhilmiyasri. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.

Tong, Rosemary Putnam. (2006). *Feminist Thought: -A More Comprehensive Introduction.* diterjemahkan dalam Bahasa Indonesia oleh Aquaini Priyatna Prabasmara-. Bandung: Jalasutra.

Vogel, L. (2013). *Marxism and the Oppression of Women: Toward a Unitary Theory.* Leiden: Brill. Pdf.

