



Women in Traditional Customs in Novels by Indonesian Female Authors

Perempuan dalam Adat di dalam Novel Karya Penulis Perempuan Indonesia

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Abstrak

Perempuan dalam adat acap kali mendapatkan perlakuan yang tidak adil, sama halnya dengan tokoh-tokoh dalam novel *Tarian Bumi* karya Oka Rusmini dan *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam* karya Dian Purnomo. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan kaitan antara kedua sumber yang kemudian dikumpulkan menjadi data-data berupa kutipan dengan teori feminisme. Berawal dari analisis unsur intrinsik kemudian analisis kaitan perempuan dalam adat dengan 5 fokus, yakni (1) diskriminasi perempuan dalam adat, (2) subordinasi perempuan dalam adat, (3) pelecehan perempuan dalam adat, (4) stereotip perempuan dalam adat dan (5) perjuangan dan pemberontakan perempuan dalam adat. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah kualitatif. Teknik pengumpulan data berupa simak catat, lalu diinterpretasikan dan disimpulkan. Hasil penelitian ini adalah ditemukannya kaitan antara kedua sumber data dari segi unsur intrinsik sampai kaitan perempuan dalam adat yang terdiri dari 5 fokus sehingga menghasilkan penegasan bahwa kedua karya yang dijadikan sumber data merupakan bentuk dari perjuangan perempuan.

Kata kunci: Perempuan, Adat, *Tarian Bumi*, *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam*, Feminisme.

Abstract

*Women in traditional customs often experience unfair treatment, as is the case with the characters in the novels *Tarian Bumi* by Oka Rusmini and *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam* by Dian Purnomo. This research aims to describe the connection between the two sources, which are then compiled into data in the form of quotations using feminist theory. The study begins with an analysis of intrinsic elements, followed by an analysis of the relationship between women and traditional customs through five focal points: (1) discrimination against women in traditional customs, (2) subordination of women in traditional customs, (3) harassment of women in traditional customs, (4) stereotypes of women in traditional customs, and (5) the struggles and rebellion of women in traditional customs. The method used in this research is qualitative. Data collection techniques include observation and note-taking, followed by interpretation and conclusion. This research reveals a connection between the two sources in terms of intrinsic elements and the relationship between women and traditional customs through the five focal points, affirming that both works represent women's struggles.*

Keywords: *Women, Tradition, Tarian Bumi, Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam, Feminism.*

PENDAHULUAN

One of the recurring discussions in literary works is about women. Discussions about women often produce two perspectives, positive and negative. Similarly, the portrayal of women in traditional customs in novels by Indonesian female authors reflects this dichotomy. However, on this occasion, the focus will be on the negative aspects (Derana, 2016). Women in traditional customs often face imbalanced pressures—between men and women. Many Indonesian female authors have produced works centered on the themes of struggle (or even rebellion). For instance, Oka Rusmini, in her novel *Tarian Bumi* (2017), creates female characters who challenge traditional customs to gain their freedom as women. Likewise, Dian Purnomo, in her novel *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam* (2020), portrays similar themes. Both novels highlight women's struggles and rebellions as central characters who strive to free themselves from the chains of tradition.

Women in traditional customs with gender disparities are often the result of misguided traditions that are either misrepresented as religious practices or religion that has been “traditionalized” (Widayani & Hartati, 2015). In *Tarian Bumi* (Rusmini, 2017), under the guise of tradition or religion, the character Telaga is restrained as a woman, despite being born into a high caste. In *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam* (Purnomo, 2022), the character Magi experiences sexual harassment and violence but is denied freedom due to the pretext of customs.

Women are the most vulnerable to sexual violence, ranging from robbery, harassment, and rape to being murdered after being raped (Imam, 2015). The emergence of works by Indonesian female authors can indirectly be seen as a form of advocacy for women's rights and rebellion against the injustices faced by women. Many women are raised with dreams of luxurious weddings as the pinnacle memory of their lives. However, the process they must endure is often unbearably painful, even to imagine; starting with being abducted on the street, forced into a man's home, and tamed like an animal. What is even more heartbreaking is the response of the surrounding community, which often treats such events as normal and, shortly afterward, acts as if nothing had happened (Purnomo, 2022). For these reasons, feminism emerges as a movement to fight for women's rights. Based on the discussion above, two research questions arise: (1) What are the intrinsic elements of the novel *Tarian Bumi* by Oka Rusmini and the novel *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam* by Dian Purnomo? (2) How are women in traditional customs depicted in novels by Indonesian female authors?

REVIEW TEORI

Feminism is a movement or effort by women to achieve equal rights with men. Feminists strive to elevate their status to prevent being viewed as mere objects or inferior beings and to avoid subordination. They believe that both women and men are equally human. One prominent figure in feminism is Kate Millett, a radical-libertarian feminist. In her work *Sexual Politics* (1970), Millett argues that the root of oppression or cruel and unjust treatment of women lies deeply buried within the sex or gender system of patriarchy. Radical feminism focuses on women's reproduction and sexuality as sources of subordination by men, identifying patriarchy as the cause of structural inequalities in society (Rasyida, 2018). Radical feminism emerged during the early feminist period, dating back to the 1800s (Raharjo, 2019).

Examples of radical feminism can be found in the novels *Tarian Bumi* (Rusmini, 2017) and *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam* (2023). In *Tarian Bumi*, the character Telaga rebels against traditional gender roles entrenched in customs, where a

woman of Ida Ayu caste is expected to marry a man of Ida Bagus caste. When Telaga marries a man from the Sudra caste, she is treated like trash, even by her own mother. Conversely, the character Wayan does not face oppression from her surroundings. Similarly, Sekar (Kenanga) experiences oppression due to her Sudra background, while her husband remains unaffected. Even women's wombs in this novel are often referred to as waste disposal sites for men, mere borrowed spaces.

In *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam*, the character Magi is captured, tamed like an animal to be married off, raped to prevent her escape, and society turns a blind eye. When Magi resists, she is accused of defying customs, while the man responsible remains unscathed despite his immoral behavior. It can be concluded that radical feminism seeks to challenge traditional gender roles, fight stereotypes and subordination of women, and raise public awareness about issues such as harassment, rape, and sexual violence often perpetuated by patriarchal systems.

Several relevant studies support this analysis. The first is “Pemberontakan Budaya Patriarki dalam Novel *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam* Karya Dian Purnomo: Kajian Antropologi Feminisme Henrietta L. Moore” (Damayanti, 2022), which examines patriarchal customs, the rebellion of the main character, and the societal structures influencing the character’s resistance. The findings highlight the patriarchal culture and the main character’s rebellion rooted in the restriction of women’s access to power. The second study is “Jejak Kekerasan pada Novel *Tarian Bumi* Karya Oka Rusmini” (Haryanti, 2017), which discusses the role of customs and politics in perpetuating violence against women and their struggles to voice their opinions and desires. The third study is “Realitas Sosial dalam Novel *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam* Karya Dian Purnomo” (Rosdiani et al., 2021), which explores four aspects of social reality: objective realities, such as traditional practices like *Yappa Maiwe* (forced marriage), and subjective realities, such as verbal and physical violence against women rooted in customs.

The fourth study is “Perlawanan Tokoh Perempuan terhadap Budaya Patriarki dalam Novel *Tarian Bumi* Karya Oka Rusmini (Kajian Feminisme)” (Hardianto & Raharjo, 2022), which emphasizes gender equality in rights and obligations and analyzes the resistance of female characters against oppressive customs using feminist theory. The fifth study is “Peran Perempuan dalam Novel *Tarian Bumi* Karya Oka Rusmini” (Yanti et al., 2018), which examines women’s roles in the novel, particularly within families and societies. The sixth study is “Stereotip Gender terhadap Perempuan dalam Novel *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam* Karya Dian Purnomo” (Oktiza & Yenny Hayati, 2023), which investigates gender stereotypes, their causes, and their impacts, all of which are rooted in customs that continue to bind women in Sumba.

METODE

This research uses a qualitative method with data in the form of quotes from the novels *Tarian Bumi* by Oka Rusmini and *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam* by Dian Purnomo. The data collection technique involves observation and note-taking. The data analysis technique is carried out by first reading *Tarian Bumi* by Oka Rusmini and *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam* by Dian Purnomo. After reading carefully, the researcher selects several dialogues or narratives that align with the theory, namely feminism. Once the data is collected, the researcher analyzes, dissects, and interprets it to understand the results. The instruments used in this research include the two novels as the data sources, sticky notes to mark parts for discussion, pencils to make important notes, and a notebook.

HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

Intrinsic Elements of the Novels Tarian Bumi by Oka Rusmini and Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam by Dian Purnomo

1. Theme

The theme of the novel *Tarian Bumi* by Oka Rusmini revolves around the struggle and rebellion of Balinese women against traditional customs in their pursuit of freedom. Below is the excerpt:

“Tugeg tidak sedang bermain-main, kan?”

“Ini serius.” (Rusmini, 2017: 146).

The above excerpt describes the moment when Telaga makes a major life decision, choosing to marry the man she loves, who belongs to the Sudra caste, rather than the Brahmana man chosen by her family, whom she does not love. As a woman, she also wants to have the right to choose her partner, a privilege usually reserved for men.

Similarly, in *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam* by Dian Purnomo, the theme centers on a woman's fight to liberate herself from customs that treat her as an object or animal. Below is the excerpt:

“Dong terlalu gila untuk ko lawan Maka ko harus lebih gila, Magi, katanya pada diri sendiri.” (Purnomo, 2022: 271).

The excerpt illustrates Magi's second act of defiance, aiming to free herself from oppressive customs. She refuses to be tamed like an animal by the cruel Leba Ali and will persist in her fight, even at the risk of her life.

2. Plot

The plot of *Tarian Bumi* employs a mixed structure, alternating between flashbacks and the present. The story begins with Telaga's life as a mother to Sari, before shifting to other events in a non-linear sequence.

In contrast, the plot of *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam* follows a chronological structure, consistently progressing from the beginning to the end, depicting Magi's journey from being shackled by customs to rebelling against them as part of her fight for justice.

3. Characters and Characterization

This section focuses on the characters discussed about women and traditions in both novels.

a. Characters in *Tarian Bumi*

- 1) Telaga: A curious woman who prioritizes her rights to choose her life's path, refusing to be controlled by men, family, or tradition.]
- 2) Sekar (Kenanga): Ambitious and willing to do anything to achieve her dreams, she is a Sudra woman striving to rise to a noble status.
- 3) Sadri: Envious and resentful of Telaga's beauty and perfection.
- 4) Sari: Obedient and cheerful, she deeply loves Telaga, who raised her as a single parent.
- 5) Wayan: A strong-willed yet gentle man who supports his wife, Telaga.
- 6) Gambreg: A traditionalist who strongly opposes Telaga and Wayan's marriage due to caste differences, even forcing Telaga to relinquish her Brahmana status.

- 7) Dalem: A strong and patient woman who endures gang rape and lovingly raises her child, striving to fulfill her desires.
- 8) Putu Sarma: A manipulative and lecherous man.
- b. Characters in *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam*
 - 1) Magi Diela: A resilient woman with unyielding determination to fight for her freedom from patriarchal traditions.
 - 2) Leba Ali: A cunning and exploitative man who uses tradition to justify his immoral actions.

4. Setting

a. Place

Tarian Bumi is set in Bali, while *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam* is set in Sumba.

b. Place

- 1) *Tarian Bumi* takes place around 1965, marked by the G30S/PKI movement in Bali.
- 2) *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam* is set in 2019, based on a real-life story in Sumba, as noted in the author's postscript.

5. Point of View

The point of view used in the novel *Tarian Bumi* by Oka Rusmini is the third-person perspective. This is because the narration is conveyed by "telling" the story from outside any one character's personal viewpoint. Similarly, in the novel *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam* by Dian Purnomo, it also employs the third-person perspective.

6. Moral Message

The novel *Tarian Bumi* by Oka Rusmini and the novel *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam* have almost the same message. *Tarian Bumi* aims to emphasize that women should be free from the chains of patriarchal customs, with a dominant focus on the freedom to choose their own path in life. Meanwhile, *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam* seeks to stress that women should not be treated like objects or animals; women should be free from the shackles of patriarchal customs and focus dominantly on freedom from all forms of gender-based violence.

7. Language Style

In the novel *Tarian Bumi*, there is the use of hyperbole, which can be seen in the following quote:

"Kulit perempuan itu terbuat dari sinar matahari. Kau lihat! Apabila kau berani menyentuhnya, seluruh dewa akan melemparkan senjata terbaiknya." (Rusmini, 2017: 9).

The above quote is exaggerated, with phrases like "terbuat dari sinar matahari" (made of sunlight) and "seluruh dewa akan melemparkan senjata terbaiknya" (all gods will throw their best weapons), which are too hyperbolic. In addition, there is also the use of personification, as seen in this quote:

"Masa lalu itu tiba-tiba meloncat dari kepalanya." (Rusmini, 2017: 3).

This quote is illogical and is used as a metaphor or symbol. The past, of course, cannot jump out of someone's head. Meanwhile, in the novel *Perempuan*

yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam, there is the use of periphrasis, a statement that could be replaced by a single word. The following is the quote:

“Lupa kain lupa kebaya.” (Purnomo, 2022: 62).

The meaning of this quote is when Magi chooses to run away from the marriage, and she is considered to have forgotten the “kain” (cloth) and “kebaya” (traditional dress), which can be interpreted as forgetting the customs and family. Next, there is also the use of personification, as seen in this quote:

“Hari itu dunia berlari lebih cepat” (Purnomo, 2022: 37).

This quote carries a metaphorical meaning, as of course, a day cannot run.

Women and Tradition in Novels by Indonesian Female Authors

1. Gender Discrimination in Tradition

In the tradition portrayed in the novels *Tarian Bumi* and *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam*, women experience gender discrimination. In *Tarian Bumi*, the characters Luh Dalem and Luh Sekar discuss the differences between women and men—differences that are unjust and seemingly oppressive. These differences make female characters appear as though they have no right to voice their complaints. The following quote illustrates this:

“Perempuan Bali itu, Luh, perempuan yang tidak bisa mengeluarkan keluhan. Mereka lebih memilih berpeluh. Hanya dengan cara itu mereka sadar dan tahu bahwa mereka masih hidup. Keringat mereka adalah api. Keringat itulah asap dapur bisa tetap terjaga. Mereka tidak hanya menyusui anak yang lahir dari tubuh mereka. Mereka pun menyusui laki-laki. Menyusui hidup itu sendiri.” (Rusmini, 2017: 31).

The quote represents how a Balinese woman is depicted. They cannot express complaints and can only strive to survive. Meanwhile, men are represented as parasites, consuming women and using them as outlets for their sexual desires, as though women are bought to be mere satisfiers and servants, not to be married as wives and queens of the household. In the quote, Luh Dalem mentions the word Bali, which implies that this discrimination stems from a patriarchal system ingrained in tradition.

In *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam*, there is the character Magi, who does not have the freedom to choose her partner. Meanwhile, the male character Leba Ali can freely capture, rape, and then marry Magi, as though only men have the right to decide who they marry. The following quote reflects this:

“Kalau Tamo terus melawan, Tamo sendiri yang akan sakit. Kita ini perempuan. Mengalah sa, sudah. Melawan pun akan kalah.” (Purnomo, 2022: 57).

This quote portrays how Sumbanese women face discrimination simply for being women. The dialogue occurs when Magi is about to resist Leba Ali because she does not want to marry a sexual predator who has kidnapped and raped her. Magi also does not want a marriage that should be her choice to be controlled by a man under the guise of tradition in a region that follows a patriarchal system.

2. Subordination of Women in Tradition

The subordination of women in tradition is present in both *Tarian Bumi* and *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam*. In *Tarian Bumi*, the character Putu Sarma, who is the husband of Luh Sadri, refuses to visit his in-

laws' house because he does not want his dignity as a man to be diminished. His sense of self-worth as a man makes him believe that he is superior to women. Instead, it is Luh Sadri who goes in his place. The following quote illustrates this:

“Kenapa?”

“Harga diri Putu Sarma akan jatuh.” (Rusmini, 2017: 161).

This quote appears in a dialogue between Luh Sadri and her mother, Luh Gambreg. Luh Sadri pleads with her mother to grant her inheritance in the form of land—although, according to Balinese tradition, women do not receive inheritance—because she and her husband can no longer live with Putu Sarma's family, where the father constantly marries despite their cramped home. They have to sleep tightly packed together. Even though he is a Sudra, Putu Sarma still practices the patriarchal system in Balinese tradition.

In *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam*, there is a dialogue between the characters Leba Ali and Magi. He asserts to Magi that women will never be able to fight against him, a man whose evil deeds are normalized by tradition, even though Magi keep resisting. The following quote conveys this:

“Ko bisa terus melawan, tapi sa pastikan ko tidak akan menang.” (Purnomo, 2022: 55).

The above quote represents how women are portrayed in Sumbanese tradition. Women who have already been captured cannot resist; if they do, they are considered traitors to tradition, a shame to their family, and destroyers of their father's good name. That is why Leba Ali confidently says that Magi cannot fight against him. His depravity is protected by tradition that subordinates women.

3. Harassment of Women in Tradition

Harassment against women still occurs despite the existence of terms in tradition that seem grand and sacred. In *Tarian Bumi* and *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam*, the female characters also experience harassment within the context of tradition. In *Tarian Bumi*, the character Telaga faces inappropriate behavior from Putu Sarma, even though she is the wife of his brother-in-law. The following quote illustrates this:

“Sarma! Kau sudah gila. Aku istri kakak iparmu!” (Rusmini, 2017: 166).

This quote appears during a dialogue when Telaga realizes that the man who is groping her body is Putu Sarma, not her late husband. She screams and struggles, but Putu Sarma is more skilled, and fortunately, Sari, Telaga's daughter, arrives. Since Telaga is no longer a Brahmin woman, Putu Sarma feels emboldened to act inappropriately. Previously, he had only done so in his imagination, which was equally indecent.

Meanwhile, in *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam*, the character Magi is genuinely harassed by Leba Ali. Leba Ali has been eyeing Magi since she was in elementary school. Even when Magi was in elementary school, Leba Ali once harassed her by randomly touching her. When Magi is an adult, Leba Ali harasses her again, and this time it is far worse—he rapes her after capturing her. The following quote captures this:

“Dia diperkosa dalam keadaan tidak sadar dan sekarang dipaksa menikah dengan pemerkosanya.” (Purnomo, 2022: 52).

This quote represents a moment when Magi feels completely shattered. She is captured, groped indecently while in the capture vehicle, and raped after

being made unconscious. She is harassed, treated as less than human by a man who believes he has power over women and will not be considered a criminal because he is protected by the prevailing tradition.

4. Stereotypes of Women in Tradition

Stereotypes about women are certainly nothing new in the context of tradition. In *Tarian Bumi*, the character Telaga, who is an Ida Ayu, is forced by her mother to conform to the stereotypes prevailing in Balinese society. The following quote illustrates this:

“Tugeg harus pegang kata-kata tiang ini. Hargai diri Tugeg. Menjadi bangsawan itu sudah kemewahan bagi semua manusia!”
(Rusmini, 2017: 132).

This quote is found in a dialogue between the character Sekar (Kenanga), who is Telaga’s mother. Since Telaga often laughs inappropriately and sits improperly, her mother never tires of giving her advice and becomes angry if Telaga does not comply. Sekar (Kenanga) wants her daughter to grow into a woman who meets societal standards, fitting the stereotype of women in tradition.

Meanwhile, in *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam*, the character Magi is continually compared to her sister, who is pregnant with her second child, while Magi continues to rebel when she is captured to be married off. Additionally, during that time, there is a wedding season, and Magi receives numerous wedding invitations. The following quote illustrates this:

“Tahun berikutnya diawali dengan berdatangnya undangan pesta perkawinan Dia juga mulai dibanding-bandingkan” (Purnomo, 2022: 221).

The quote above gives a picture of how conservative the society is. They place pressure on women, while men are not asked when they will have children, even though children are born after the union of a man and a woman. They uphold the stereotype still embedded in tradition, and even in the broader society—such as urban communities—women continue to face similar pressures.

5. Women’s Struggle and Rebellion in Tradition

Women endure much suffering in tradition, and as a form of struggle and rebellion, they do several things to attain freedom. In *Tarian Bumi*, the character Telaga chooses to marry Wayan, a man from the Sudra caste, because she insists on marrying the man she loves, not someone chosen by others for her with the justification of tradition. The following quote illustrates this:

“Hari ini juga tiang akan menanggalkan nama Ida Ayu. Tiang akan jadi perempuan Sudra yang utuh” (Rusmini, 2017: 173).

This quote represents Telaga’s form of struggle and rebellion. She chooses Wayan and relinquishes the name Ida Ayu, which is highly revered in Balinese tradition, for the sake of her freedom as a woman. Telaga emphasizes that women too should have the right to choose who they marry, not just men. She also asserts that tradition should not be a barrier to women’s happiness.

Meanwhile, in *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam*, the character Magi struggles hard to free herself from the control of Leba Ali, who uses tradition as an excuse to claim ownership over her body, which should belong to her alone. Magi uses every possible means, not caring if it means experiencing pain or even death; the most important thing is to liberate herself. The following quote illustrates this:

“Lebih baik satu kali disakiti seperti ini tetapi sa bisa dapat sa punya kemerdekaan lagi, Ma Gustin.” (Purnomo, 2022: 303).

This quote is a dialogue where Magi successfully escapes for the second time from Leba Ali. In her initial strategy, she was too impulsive, so she failed, but her second strategy successfully freed her from his control. Before taking this step, Magi had collaborated with other women fighters. Even those who helped Magi had changed the mindset of the police, who had initially agreed with the patriarchal tradition, which had previously freed Leba Ali because he invoked tradition. In this second opportunity, the police acted justly.

PENUTUP

Based on the data and explanations above, it can be concluded that women within traditional customs experience various negative and detrimental conditions. These include gender discrimination, which highlights stark differences between men and women; gender subordination, which consistently places women as secondary to men; gender stereotypes, which constrain women with conservative norms; and sexual harassment, which causes immense suffering and deep trauma for many women. The female characters in traditional customs depicted in *Tarian Bumi* by Oka Rusmini (2017) and *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam* by Dian Purnomo (2022) express their disagreement and protest through various forms of struggle and rebellion, aiming to achieve their freedom as women. Evidently, through books addressing women's issues written by Indonesian women, readers can witness the forms of struggle and advocacy for freedom and women's rights, particularly those of women bound by traditional customs as portrayed in *Tarian Bumi* and *Perempuan yang Menangis kepada Bulan Hitam*.

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