

Women as Souvenir Vendors: An Effort to the Achievement of Gender Equality Through the Strengthening of the Economic Base of the Family

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The purpose of this writing is to describe one of the efforts of the women in Bali who do jobs as souvenir vendors. In this type of job they sell any kinds of merchandises in order to fulfill the family necessity. This job is ideally and usually done by men for the reason of quite tiring and time-consuming for the achievement of the targeted income per day. In Bali however, the number of women who involved in this job is numerous. In the midst of her role as a wife as well as housewives, a woman has to prepare quite lots of things for the family, and she also has to work as a souvenir vendor. Usually, the women do this job during the day, exactly from 10 in the morning until 4 in the afternoon. This indicates that, besides as a woman she does her duty as a wife and a mother by doing almost all of the house or domestic work. In fact, there is an expectation of being equalized when a woman has the ability and opportunity to earn a living or as breadwinners. In her family this condition will bring prestige since the position of women is to follow the ideology of patriarchy (it is known as purusa in Hindu belief) and this makes the Balinese Hindu women are quite difficult to achieve gender equality. Nevertheless, the women in Bali (Balinese Hindu women) are able to achieve the position of being equalized by strengthening the economic base of the family, including as souvenir vendors.

Keywords: women, souvenir vendor, equality, empowerment, economic

Introduction

Balinese women, if they are compared to the majority of women, they have uniquenesses and differences. Besides they are very friendly they also have strong spirit. Being friendly, unique, have strong spirit, etc., they have to be able to deliver happiness and pleasure especially to their family on one side, and they have to do almost all of the domestic work on the other side. This condition forces them to find excellent strategy in order to be able to manage and share the time, energy, mind to complete the various work. Moreover, those who are married and working, should be able to carry out their profession as a wife, a mother, and a

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worker at a place of business with a good, even without blemish. As if this condition reminds other people that as a woman who has got married and has children she has to be humble although in fact she has a good job. So even though they already earn a living to support the family necessity still they are considered the second person in the family. This phenomenon is in accordance with the idea of Bhasin (1996, p. v) as stated below:

Nowadays the role and the position of women in the community are still as being pictured in the stories on television movies (soap operas and telenovelas). They stay at home just doing the three *M* such as *Masak* (cooking), *Macak* (preening), and *Manak* (delivering babies). They are often given a cultural designation “kanca wingking” which has the meaning of “a friend who is in the rear and responsible for the housework” although she is already a career woman.

Women, wherever they are and especially the women in Bali are always difficult to have their right. There is a myth which is believed that women are the individuals who have the responsibility of giving attention to the family. It means wherever a woman is and even if she has a high position at a work place, the role of taking care of the family can not be neglected from her. Actually, up to the recent time lots of defenses have been done against women, but still they are not right for men and even they are busy working for fulfilling the needs of their family.

The weak position of women, especially Balinese women can not be separated from the patriarchal culture which is reinforced with the system of *purusa* that must be adhered to by the Balinese Hindu community. The culture of patriarchal and *purusa* places the position of women under the control of men. Even a woman is married, she is considered to have been separated from her initial life (the previous life with her family) and then she fully becomes the right of the man who became her husband. The concept of *Nyung* (to take) or *Kejung* (to be taken) and *mekidihang* (to entrust sincerely) in the marriage tradition of Balinese Hindu community has indeed normatively and legally broken the relationship between the woman and her birth parents. So no matter how the woman defends herself before her husband and her husband's family in the future time, she will be still difficult because the woman had been entrusted consciously to her husband by her parents.

Vulnerability of the women is due to the strong patriarchal culture paternalistic authority (paternal) that exists in the patriarchal culture. Paternalistic power which is the main point or the main thing in a patriarchal culture directly makes the position of women always be at the mercy of men. No matter how great a woman is and even she could give everything to the family she loves, she still is under the control of the men (by her husband and the family of her husband). And the rules that apply to the new family (her family) are rules that must be obeyed, even as a child she was taught independently by her biological parents. Male power in a patriarchal culture can be described through an explanation given by Bhasin (2002) as cited in Atmadja (2010, p. 244) as follows:

The right way to describe the control of men over women is through the paternalistic authority (paternal). There is power, but paternalistic because women are provided shelter, food, and security vis-à-vis outsiders. Paternalistic power has oppressive aspects, but it also involves a set of mutual obligations and is not often perceived as oppressive. This is what makes it difficult to be recognized and confronted.

The understanding of legalized male power in patriarchal and *purusa* culture is interesting to be observed because it appears many implications especially on the lives of women. One of the implications is when a family only has a daughter; the family would otherwise lose their daughter because she is married. Since the

daughter is married then she is no longer the right of her parents, but she becomes the right of the bridegroom. This kind of thinking is supposed to be corrected. Then it does not mean a frontal action to defense women but rather appreciate the good aspects of the male and the female. Sincerely, there has been a concept of love in the marital relationship in the Vedas, the Hindu religious scriptures. Even in Atharvaveda XIV.1.52 is explained that a man promised to give happiness to a woman who became his wife:

Mameyam astu posya,
mahyam tvadad brhaspatih.
maya patya prajavati,
sam jiva saradah satam.
means :

The bride should I support. Brhaspati God has given you to me. Oh bride, may you be happy with my life (husband) for a hundred years, along with the generation. (Titib, 1996, p. 396)

Thus, it can be understood that in carrying out the paternalistic power, men should remain on compassion as appears previously in Atharvaveda XIV. 1:52, which means the harmonious relationship in family life between the male and female, could be established.

At the present time although Balinese women often get poor treatment from the men, but the persistence of Balinese women as a wife, a mother, and a worker is still performing well. Balinese women often do not even care about the type of job they are doing, as long as that kind of job is reasonable, then they will continue to work well in order to be able to meet the needs of themselves and their family. Balinese women who choose a profession as souvenir vendors never at all feel embarrassed to run around selling merchandises only for the benefit which later will be used to fulfill the needs of everyday life. Balinese women, besides they are working as souvenir vendors not only for economic reasons but also for achieving gender equality. In their mind there is an expectation that through working they will be able to share the fulfilness of the family necessities and will achieve the position of equality in their family.

The phenomenon of Balinese women who work as souvenir vendors is interesting to be observed since there are many women who choose to do this job. Nowadays the opportunity of Balinese women to get a job becomes lesser or narrower since the number of men is getting higher to get the chance of having a job. This is one of the reasons the women sincerely do any kind of job as long as it is in accordance with the moral value in the community and it generates profits that can fulfill the needs of their necessities.

Balinese Women in the Ideology of Patriarchy (Patriarchal Ideology)

Bhasin (1996, p. 1) literally interpreted patriarchy as the men power. This means that normatively patriarchal culture legalizes men power against women. In practice, the man has the whole power in the life of a community or a family in a patriarchal culture. If, for example, a girl or a woman refuses to help parents, then she will be treated unkindly. However, on the contrary, if a boy or a man does not obey his mother's command it is considered something reasonable. It is because men are given the privilege to be a leader in the future and not as a person who to be ruled or governed. Not only in terms of burden of work, but also in terms of the appearance, women are willing to feel pain when they were not yet three months old because they have pierced ears to indicate that they were girls. So even though it can be understood as an aesthetically beautiful thing, girls are not given an opportunity to grow up bigger in order to be stronger to control the pain since a beautiful look is their desire.

Research conducted by Prof. Dr Nengah Bawa Atmadja examines in detail how cultural ideology of patriarchy is applied to *Joged* (name given to a type of Balinese dance) dancers, not only when the Joged dancers are on the performance, but also in the daily life of their family. In his book entitled *Komodifikasi Tubuh Perempuan Joged Ngebor Bali* (Body Commodification of Balinese Joged Dancers) it is well explained how a patriarchal culture is applied by the male (in the family, in a professional organization named *sekaa* in Balinese, and when on the performances by the male audiences). The women (the Joged dancers) are considered as objects of satisfaction of men who would in turn provide material benefits for the managers of the *sekaa jogged* and the family of the jogged dancers. Borrowing the ideas of Piliang (2004, pp. 212-213), it can be understood how the women body and the cultural repression are politicized which in this case women are functioned as objects of satisfaction of men.

The politicization of the women's or females' body in a patriarchal society is associated with the repression and its function or use as an "object" of pleasure for men, as the image of consumption for men, and as an entertainment or a spectacle for men. The females' body is positioned as objects, while men as subjects who consume. In the patriarchal society a system of ideology or belief is developed behind the system of gender relations and the systems place the position of women or men in unequal position. In the patriarchal ideological system, the positioning and the depiction of woman is based on the relationship that place them in the subordinate position, as an object of exploitation of the dominant male power. Patriarchal ideology not only marginalizes women physically, semiotically, but also psychologically. Women, in a variety of discourse are treated as objects of desire of males.

To understand the patriarchal ideology which has been mentioned by Piliang (2004), then it can be seen how male power is legitimized in a patriarchal culture. In a patriarchal ideology it explicitly overrides the interests and needs of the women and this condition makes the women in a marginalized position. Even in its implementation in Bali patriarchal ideology is supported through strengthening the system of *purusa* (a system of men side in Balinese Hindu community). In Balinese Hindu inheritance rights are given only to the men, and women do not have inheritance rights seen from the traditional Balinese law (Wriyasa, 2008, p. 24). And the more extreme one if there is a man who would become the family of the women (if there is no man in the woman's family), then the man who would become part of his wife family will be considered *nyentana* (the status of a man who belongs to his wife's line). The man will be gossiping and underestimated. A woman who married a man and the man belongs to her family line will be regarded as a selfish woman because of positioning the position of the men under him, and this condition cannot yet be accepted well.

The phenomenon of marginalizing the women can be found in various places in Bali. If a woman is angry and demands her right then she would be considered wrong and inappropriate. This happens especially in the marital relationship. In the book of Prof. Dr Nengah Bawa Atmadja the exploitation of women is described from the family level up to the public level and this makes the women very difficult to have the defense. To fulfill the necessities of herself, the family, and the manager of the professional organization, a female dancer must be willing to dance as a strip tease dancer in order to fulfill the targeted amount of money. The support and role of the parents for their daughter to be a *joged* dancer and dance based on the requirements of the consumers is an indication of capitalist economic system. In this case people will become very obedient to the power of money and power of market (Atmadja, 2010, p. 243). Whereas in the laws of Manu a father should protect girls in their childhood, will be continued by their husband who cares them in their youth, and later their son will guard them when they are old (Andeney, 2000 as cited in Atmadja, 2010, p. 242). In the Manawa Dharmacastra scripture, Chapter III, sloka 58 and 59 it is explained that women should be respected in their family.

The Manawa Dharmacastra scripture Chapter III Sloka 58: For every family who does not respect women, definitely the family will fall apart into dust. The house where the daughter is not properly respected delivers the curse and swears, the family will be destroyed entirely, as if it is crushed by the supernatural forces.

The Manawa Dharmacastra scripture Chapter III Sloka 59: Therefore the people who really want prosperous, it is a must for them to always respect women. The scripture obliges all people to respect women. (Titib, 1996, p. 2)

Although the obligations of men should respect women, especially in a family, but in reality of everyday life the men power against women can not be avoided. It even happens in every line of Balinese life. This may be due to the condition of the patriarchal capitalism system proposed by Shiva (1997, p. 12) which explains that in patriarchal capitalism has the principle of production must produce profit and foster capital as high as to cause forests exploited massively to achieve profits as much as possible. In practice, patriarchy develops the principle of masculinity which tends to kill women's reproduction and reproduction, so that the position of women shifts away from being a life-giving woman to be consumer (Shiva, 2005, p. 198).

Thus, wherever the place, no matter what the conditions, the culture of patriarchy is still described as the power of men over women. Although the rules of power have other meanings such as protection, respect, and appreciation on each other, the realization of a patriarchal culture is to dominate women. This has occurred since centuries and it is very difficult to be improved. If there are men who could place a woman in a reasonable position and respect her, the number is quite minimal. The men are very afraid of being given the derision "man's wife fear" which is an insult that can make men feel uncomfortable to be in their environment. It means that by mastering the women are an option for men because it is supposed to be true in the life of society that embraces the patriarchal culture.

The Culture of *Purusa*: Men's Right Over the Women's Right

The marginalization of women does not only occur when women do some interactions or relationships with men. In fact there is a phenomenon in Bali in which a daughter does not have any right to have the inheritance of her parents, because men are considered to have rights to receive an inheritance either materially or non materially. In reality it is often found when a family does not have any sons and all of his daughters had married, then the member of the family who becomes the heir after the parents of the deceased is the uncle of the family of the father. Even the daughters have been seriously taking care of their parents until the end of their life, but in fact the inheritance still falls on the family of the late father, they are either the uncle or brother of the father. It occurs because in Veda scripture (in the Rigveda) itself has been officially stated that men are entitled to all rights of inheritance. Of course it is understandable that in the Hindu religion itself patriarchal culture is deeply ingrained in the lives of Hindus society as stated in the Rigveda (Titib, 1996, pp. 536-538).

(1) Rgveda II. 17. 7

Amajur iva pitroh saca sati, samanad a sadasa tvam iye bhagam, krdhi praketa upa masya bhara, daddhi bhagam tanvo yanemamah

Means: a daughter always lives with her parents, like an unmarried old woman, asks for some money from her parents. It is supposed her parents think of this problem. Please think and give some of the inheritance to her for maintaining her life and for serving other guest.

(2) Rgveda I. 73. 9

Isanasah pitrvittasya rayah

Means: The son inherits the belonging of the ancestors.

(3) Rgveda II. 13. 4

Prajabhyah pustim vibhajanta asate

Means: The parents inherit their belongings to the son.

(4) Rgveda II. 38. 5

Jykestham mata suna ve bhagam adhat

Means: The mother inherits her belonging to the son

(5) Rgveda III. 31. 2

Na jamayen tanvo riktham araik, cakar garbham sanitur nidhanam

Means: The legitimate child does not inherit the part of his ancestor's belonging to his sister, but he married his sister.

The sons are responsible to the marriage of their sisters.

The rules of the *purusa* system have been regulated in the Rigveda which has been mentioned above. The space for women to obtain the inheritance rights of the parents has been explicitly negated. The reason is, the patriarchal culture that is reinforced with *purusa* system gives meaning that the son owns the legitimate status. Even this matter is brought to the domain of law, the position of women is still weak, though there are defended. And in accordance with regulations dated October 13, 1900 on the Law of Inheritance Applies for Balinese Hindu population of Buleleng Regency, it is clearly stated in sections 3 and 5 that women get the least part of that legacy. Even in section 9 it is mentioned if women do not receive the inheritance either, then the right is revoked and they are treated as if they had died (Windia, 2008, pp. 100-103). Moreover, when a region imposes a system of "price" for women to be married, there will be the way of thinking that women have been purchased by the men and the woman will be absolutely under the men power. This condition becomes more severe because on one side she has no more right in her own family, on the other side, at her husband family she is regarded as something that has been purchased so she can be treated in accordance with the wishes of the men. This already happened in the past, such as written by Covarrubias who did a research on the island of Bali in the year of 1930s as follows.

In Buleleng, the price of the bride is more expensive than in the South part of Bali; Lieffrink mentioned the prices are between 400-600 ringgit, and Van Eck mentioned between 100 up to 600 guilders (or about 40 to 240 ringgit), but Dr. Korn, the latest authority, mentioned in his writing in *Adatrecht* that in the law document in Bali the number of *najaran* is over 20,000 kepeng (16 ringgit) and consequently the lower costs for the girls who belong to the low-caste. (Covarrubias, 2013, p. 151)

The marginalization of women which is caused by the patriarchal cultural practices marginalize women has been going from the past up to the present time. Utari (2006) in a seminar on the Second Scientific Meetings of Teacher Associations and Gender Perspective on Legal Enthusiasts Indonesia revealed that 1) Bali Customary law in having to do with the family and inheritance is gender bias, especially the right to inherit (material and immaterial) is given the priority for men; 2) The existence of gender bias in the customary law of Bali, theoretically provides wide opportunities for the male power and also provides a solid foundation in a patriarchal culture. But for the level of practice does not yet have the data which can explain the direct relationship between patrilineal family laws with a high potential for violence against women in Bali. Even if it happened a lot but it does not exploit to the public, it is kept neatly in a domestic domain, which remains to be investigated further (Utari, 2006, p. 13). In this context it is understood that the violence experienced by Balinese women can be regarded as reasonable, considering the Balinese woman embracing two cultures on male power (patriarchy and *purusa*) which consciously support the practice of male power.

To Become a Souvenir Vendor: One of the Women's Efforts to Achieve Gender Equality in the Domination of Patriarchal Ideology Through the Empowerment of Families Economic Base

The Balinese Hindu women can be stated quite different from the other women, especially those who live in the villages. The hegemony of patriarchal ideology through the implementation of *purusa* system which is intensely involved into the doctrines of Hindu religion, causes the Balinese Hindu women not only to be friendly, but also to be powerful and tough. Being powerful and tough are in the sense of being able to deal with life issues they face, both within the family and the social life in the community. The life issues of Balinese women are based on the patriarchal culture which is being experienced by those who live in the villages. However, the attitude of being more tolerate of villager women causing the gender conflict is barely audible in the village. This is in accordance with the idea of Suryakusuma (2012, p. 156) which describes the condition of villager women as follows:

Poor villager women actually play a more important role in the survival of their families. But usually they are not aware of any regulations or laws that can improve their condition. Consequently, where there should be a conflict there is no conflict.

The attitudes of villager women who tend to be tolerate and accept whatever the condition as a natural for women causing gender conflicts are very rare and almost never happen in the village. The attitudes of being tolerate are not only at home or in the family, but also on the aspects of work. On this condition villager women also choose to do the remaining work though it is difficult enough to be done in order to get the money for fulfilling their families' and their needs. The idea of Suryakusuma (2012, p. 142) concerning the attitude of acceptance of the villager women is interesting to be examined as follows:

Poor villager woman would be willing to work in any condition with bad return, no matter how difficult the condition, because they do not have the bargaining power at all. Villager women face overlapping pressures. In addition to traditional roles in the family, they also have to work.

The idea proposed by Suryakusuma (2012, p. 142) also describes the condition of Balinese women who tend to accept a variety of work in order to earn money for their families. Suryakusuma (2012, p. 142) also states that in Bali, more and more women are working to lift the stone and cement to various construction works. The same thing is also stated by Astiti (2004, pp. 187-189) that women tend to choose jobs in the informal sectors since it can be done not in their busy life as housewives. This phenomenon is a real picture of the Balinese women life, especially Hindus because they embrace two political systems patriarchal and *purusa*. No matter how the conditions they tend to accept as something natural so they work as souvenir vendors. Although this kind of job is a tiring one, the economic demands make them diligent to earn a fortune under the shadow of Kintamani tourism which will soon be transformed into Geopark international tourism resort.

A souvenir vendor as a capital minimal work becomes a major factor for Balinese women to be chosen as a job. They do not need to have a certificate of high education, special skills, or expertise in something. They need small number of money to buy some products that they diligently sell later. Often they have to run around chasing the tourists in order to purchase the merchandise they sell. No matter how much they can get it will be very important for survival, because they are able to help to fulfill the needs of their family life. In this case, women, especially those who are married and have children, earn a living for the family economy which is not

their primary obligation. This is in accordance with the idea of Suryakusuma (2012, p. 294) which confirms that the woman is not a secondary earner, because women have a responsibility for the welfare of all members of the family, both physically and psychologically. There is an expectation for women who work as souvenir vendors that when they are able to get any amount of economic resources, their work will be appreciated.



Figure 1. Seorang Perempuan Berusaha Mengejar Wisatawan Agar Kainnya Terjual (kanan) dan Seorang Ibu-ibu Harus Mengajak Anaknya Ikut Mengacung.

Some of the souvenir vendor women who were met by the writer said that the work they do is to help the economic needs of their families which is not completely fulfilled by their husbands. In fact, some of them also said that while they are working as souvenir vendors, often their husbands are in charge handling the children at home. However, the condition of mutual understanding between men and women is not fully applicable to souvenir vendors when the woman can help the man to make a living. Findings indicate there are also souvenir vendor women who should bring their children with them while working so there is a need to encourage her husband to work because they still think women should take care of everything including making a living. However, will Balinese retreat and leave the profession as souvenir vendors? The spirit owned by souvenir vendors' women is much beyond the spirit of other women especially for those who live in the city and become career women. They diligently do the profession as souvenir vendors; because this is the only work they are able to do in a condition filled with limitations, with an expectation that their income will place them equal to the husband's position in the family. Then it can be understood that a Balinese woman becomes a souvenir vendor which is not just to help the family's economic needs that cannot be fulfilled optimally by the husband, but the aims also to achieve gender equality in the family. They will be rewarded if they are able to provide something more to their family.

Closing

The phenomenon of women who are under the patriarchal ideology makes them not only difficult to move freely, but also places them in the second position after the males. The condition of Balinese Hindu women is rather complicated which is caused by the two powers over men who embraced the patriarchal culture and *purusa*. This makes the second position held by women in Bali especially Hindu be an unchangeable position.

However, in the midst of the two strong male powers in Bali, especially the women in rural area are never tired of making themselves respected by men even in aligning their position with men. One strategy that the women in the village of Bali do is as souvenir vendors in order to strengthen the economic basis of their family. To help to strengthen the family economy, they have an expectation to achieve gender equality in the family.

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