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Amba in Gender Study Perspective

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Gender studies are used as a tool to examine gender issues, especially in analyzing gender inequality in society. There are three gender assessment criteria used to re-read the story of the Amba character in the Mahabharata comic by Gun Gun. The three criteria are (1) Activity Analysis, (2) Control/Dominance Analysis, and (3) Impact Analysis. Amba is one of the king's daughters who gets unfair treatment in her life. Regarding this treatment as a symbolic fact, it is important to re-read the character and life story of Dewi Amba with gender studies. This study uses a descriptive design with qualitative methods. The type of data in this study is qualitative data in the form of visual text and verbal text of the Mahabharata comic by Gun Gun in the story of Kutukan Dewi Amba (Dewi Amba's Curse). Data analysis was carried out by identifying and describing the data, classifying the data, analyzing it based on the gender study criteria that had been formulated, and drawing conclusions. The results show that in this context the dominant stereotype that women are weak and men are strong is deeply emphasized. The woman who is described as Dewi Amba is the party who is most unfairly treated due to male domination in her life.

Keywords: feminism, cultural studies, mahabharata, wayang (puppets) comics

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INTRODUCTION

Amba is one of the female characters in the Mahabharata story. Described as a beautiful princess, coveted by all princes. With her beautiful face, all the mighty princes wanted to marry her in the hope of living happily together. As a woman, Amba certainly wants to live with the man she loves. However, in the Mahabharata story, Amba as the daughter of the king does not have the power to determine her life partner.

The life partner is determined by the King, namely her own father, King Kasi. Amba as her daughter, the King would need to hold a competition to find her life partner. That is, anyone who wants to marry Dewi Amba, must meet the requirements of the competition that has been determined by the King. The winner of the contest is the owner of the full rights to the king's daughters named Amba, Ambika, and Ambalika. The process of selecting a life partner begins with a story about the inequality in the position of women and men. This story is a fragment of the Mahabharata story which is very thick with elements of patriarchal culture. Women are second class humans after men.

The narrative text of this story has been transformed by a Balinese comic artist named Gun Gun into the language of comics. By utilizing comics media, the stories in each panel can be read and understood about the space and time of presence of each narrated character. Each character in the panel presents a story that is very easy for readers to understand because, in addition to presenting pictures or illustrations of the characters, this story narration is also equipped with verbal or written text in the form of words to explain an event or story scene.

Judging from the storyline in Gun Gun's Mahabharata comic, the character Amba is made following the original Indian script, but there is an adaptation of the set of events. Amba's story is a story with a background of events on the island of Bali. Amba is one of the king's daughters who gets unfair treatment in her life. Regarding this treatment as a symbolic fact, it is important to re-read the character and life story of Dewi Amba with gender studies.

Gender Studies are used as a tool to examine gender issues, especially in analyzing gender inequality in society. The term gender was first introduced by Robert Stoller to separate human characteristics based on definitions that are socio-cultural in nature with biological characteristics. There are three gender assessment criteria that will be used to reread the story of the character Dewi Amba in the Mahabharata comic by Gun Gun. The three criteria are (1) Activity Analysis, in this case, it is necessary to analyze the roles of women and men with the guiding question being who does what? (2) Control analysis, is the control of women and men over the utilization of available resources and facilities with the guiding question being who has the most dominant control? What is the impact of equality between women and men?, and (3) Impact analysis is the impact that is felt by women and men fairly and equitably with the guiding question being who gets the greatest impact between women and men from events what is going on? (Hanum,2018:16).

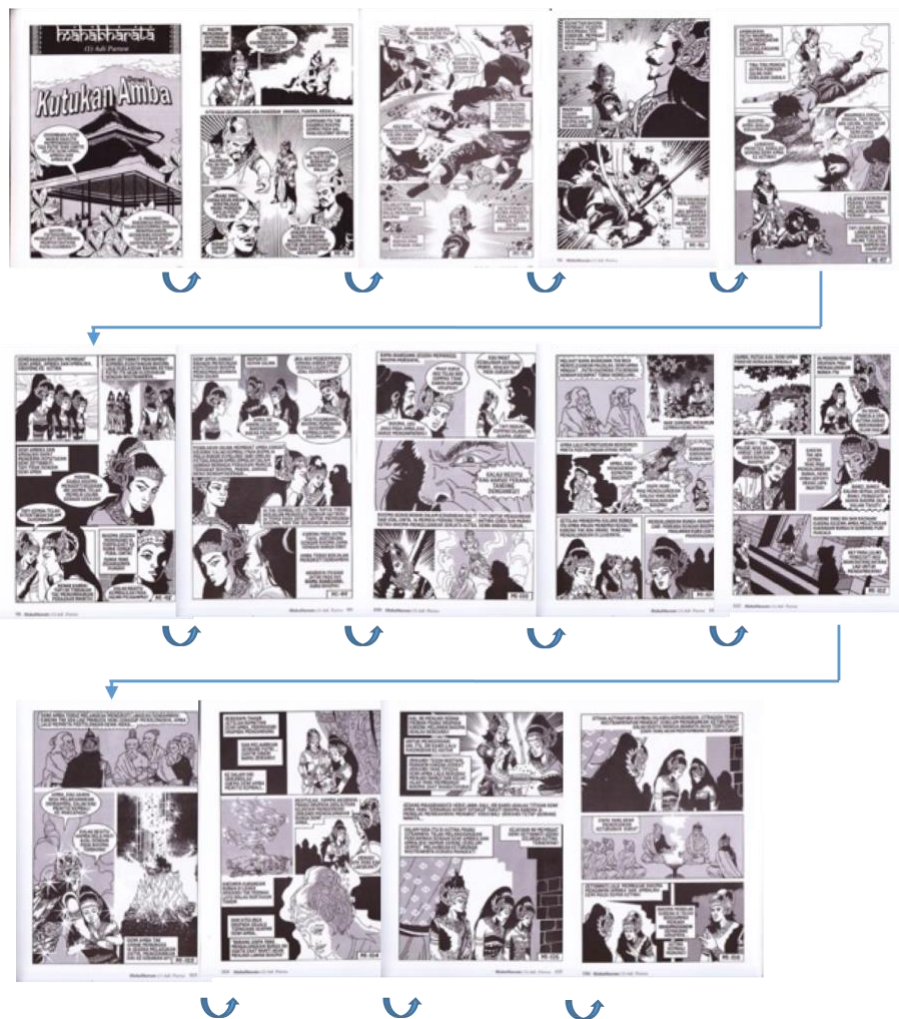
Disclosure of women's problems using gender studies often gets resistance, both from men and women. The cause of the resistance is because first, questioning the status of women is basically questioning the systems and structures that have been established, even questioning the position of women basically means dismantling the oldest structures and injustices in society. Second, there are many misunderstandings about why women's problems should be questioned. Third, the struggle for gender equality is considered as an attempt by women to turn to dominate men, so that there is "fear" for men and even women themselves in accepting gender equality efforts.

Discussing gender basically means discussing power relations that are very personal in nature, namely involving each individual and challenging privileges that we have and are currently happening. Re-reading Dewi Amba's position with a gender perspective is important

to avoid misinterpretation regarding gender or feminism. This study uses a descriptive design with qualitative methods. The type of data in this study is qualitative data in the form of visual text and verbal text of the Mahabharata comic by Gun Gun in the story of Kutukan Dewi Amba (Dewi Amba's Curse). The object of this research is the position of Amba as a woman in gender studies. The methods and techniques of data collection in this research are documentation techniques and literature study. Data analysis was carried out by identifying and describing the data, classifying the data, analyzing it based on the gender study criteria that had been formulated, and drawing conclusions. The purpose of this study is to describe the results of activity analysis, control or dominance analysis, and impact analysis.

Activity Analysis, Control/Dominance Analysis, and Impact Analysis

The story of Amba in Gun Gun's Mahabharata comic is told in Adi Parwa with the subtitle Kutukan Dewi Amba. This story is made in 14 pages by utilizing illustrations, typography, panels, and word balloons on each page. With a black and white display and setting events on the island of Bali. On the first page of this subtitle, it is narrated that there was a contest for the daughters of the Kasi country who fought over three beautiful daughters, namely Dewi Amba, Ambika, and Ambalika. Bhisama who came from the kingdom of Hastinapura took part in the competition to fight for the daughter of Kasindra.



In the following panels, the story of Bhisma's journey to the Kasi kingdom is told. Arriving at the kingdom, Bhisma met with princes from various kingdoms such as princes Awangga, Pundra, and Kosala who also wanted the three princesses of the Kasindra country to be wives. In the competition, Bhisma won the competition because Bhisma had defeated all

the princes present there. So Bhishma was entitled to the three daughters of the king who made the competition. Amba, Ambika, and Ambalika become a "gift" that is contested, then brought to the kingdom of Hastina. The three beautiful princesses will be married to a Kuru prince named Wicitrawirya. Dewi Ambika and Ambalika accepted the decision to marry Wicitrawirya, but not Dewi Amba. Dewi Amba said that in fact, she had chosen King Salwa as her lover because Amba loved him.

This is reinforced by the conversation between Amba and Bhishma. Amba said "Please brother Bhishma understand this situation! I have chosen Salwa as my lover." Then Bhishma replied, "But everything has been determined in the contest". "That's right, Brother, but this is an act of ignoring women's feelings," replied Amba. Bhishma finally allowed Amba to return to her lover King Salwa. But the King of Salwa refused Amba because, for Salwa, Amba already belonged to Bhishma because he had won the contest. King Salwa said "if I accept you, where is my pride as a man?? It's a matter of honor." King Salwa's refusal made Amba disappointed.

Dewi Amba is very sad, disappointed, upset, angry over everything she is facing. Her hatred was directed at Bhishma who had made her life so bitter because she could not be with the lover she loved. Amba then asked for justice from Rama Bhargawa, who was the teacher of Bhishma. Rama Bhargawa also helped Amba. Bhishma was summoned by Rama Bhargawa and ordered Bhishma to marry Amba. Bhishma refused his teacher's orders because Bhishma was bound by an oath not to marry for the rest of his life. Bhishma and his teacher finally fought. Seeing that Rama Bhargawa could not give him justice, Amba finally went up the mountain and meditated for Hyang Widhi's (the God) help.

Amba starts her meditation. In her meditation, Amba was met by Hyang Widhi, and the God blessed Amba. Amba is given a bouquet of flowers and is told that whoever is willing to be draped with it will be able to kill Bhishma. Amba brought the garland and wanted to put it on the knights he met, but Amba's efforts failed because none of the knights wanted to fight Bhishma. Amba again feels disappointed.

Amba is increasingly disappointed with the various situations she is in. Amba has a grudge against Bhishma. Amba feels that she is suffering because of the competition. He then asked Lord Indra for help to help him take revenge. Dewa Indra then said that her revenge would only be avenged in Amba's next life. Amba was then willing to commit suicide for revenge. Dewi Amba finally threw herself into the fire, she committed suicide because she wanted revenge.

After several years of Amba's death, Empress Drupada became pregnant and gave birth to a beautiful daughter named Srikandi. It is within Srikandi that the spirit of Dewi Amba is reincarnated. Until finally King Drupada was shocked by a terrible incident, Srikandi draped Dewi Amba's flower. In the comic story Mahabharata by Gun Gun, it is told that Srikandi meditates seriously because in her soul is Dewi Amba. Srikandi then became a tomboy, and Srikandi then killed Bhishma in the Bharatayudha war.

In the first gender study (Activity Analysis), this story analyzes Amba's role as a woman and the roles of the men around her. The story of the contest at the beginning of the story shows that Amba as a woman cannot choose a life partner or husband because there are rules that bind her. The ideology of patriarchy at the beginning of the story has been shown, namely a social system that places men as the main central authority figure in social organization. The position of men is higher than women in all aspects of social, cultural, and economic life. A love relationship should be based on women's feelings and a woman should be able to choose her own life partner, but with a competition mechanism, it means that the life partner is determined by her father. For those who are culturally oriented, they argue that the division of labor between men and women is not caused by differences in nature, but rather due to cultural factors. Culture will interact, with biological factors, and become institutionalized.

Furthermore, this institution functions as a forum for socialization, in this case, the prevailing customs and norms will be passed down from generation to generation. The heritage has actually been turned into a hegemony by a patriarchal system that has been deeply rooted in her society, both in the family environment and the environment where Amba lives. The system has civilized a less fair division of labor between men and women. The system is getting stronger because it is strengthened by the arguments of the teachings that prioritize men over women. In addition, with these arguments, men hegemonize women by demanding their rights rather than fulfilling their obligations to women. This is where women are subordinated and become inferior creatures in the patriarchal system. This comic tells the life of the character Amba in the royal family. Since childhood Amba has been positioned as a woman. As a daughter, she must behave politely and gently, following the words of a man, her father, or her future husband.

The first man who has given injustice in Dewi Amba's life is her father. Amba as a daughter is only present as the recipient of the decision, while her father as a man is the decision-maker. Father has authority over mother, children, and property. Implicitly this system instituted male government and privileges and demanded the subordination of women. This is even considered the cause of the oppression of women. However, in this competition, Amba is also a pro-feminist figure, namely a figure who supports the struggle of women in fighting for equality in dignity and worth as an equal effort to men. Amba in her submission to be willing to be a woman who was contested also resisted the order to submit to these rules. Amba showed that resistance by making a scene in the competition, that Salwa as her lover was a character who would later appear as the winner of the competition to get Amba. He prepared this effort because Amba wanted to determine her own life and did not want to fully submit to rules that were unfair to her. Although later this attempt failed because Salwa had to submit to Bhisma's supernatural powers. Amba's plan failed because of Bhisma's presence.

The beginning of the story of Dewi Amba's Curse further strengthens the position of men over women, namely arranged marriages by means of competitions. Amba's marriage plan was a contest that was not based on love, especially in the view that Bhisma as the winner of the competition was a person who was Brahmachari or someone who will never get married. Amba as a prize for the competition was handed over to Wicitrawirya as his brother who had to marry the three daughters. The contest process also proves that this story has positioned men as strong beings because only men are present as fighters. Meanwhile, women are positioned very weakly, because women are placed only as recipients of decisions on the victory of men's battles. Amba is further oppressed when she is rejected by Salwa. Salwa's refusal as her lover is more concerned with prestige than Dewi Amba's love.

According to the activity perspective, Dewi Amba's actual struggle from the royal circles to seize patriarchal hegemony or achieve gender equality has been carried out by her starting from the contest scenario to conveying her wish to Bhisma as the winner of the competition that Amba only likes Salwa. With her intelligence and courage, the Amba character fights against the "royal tradition", she is not completely subject to the rules.

Second, with the analysis of control which is the control of women and men over the utilization of available resources and facilities, the guiding question is who has the most dominant control? In the story of Dewi Amba's Curse, it appears that the male is the most dominating party because it is men who decide the rules and women are the recipients of the decisions. One of the proofs of this dominance is shown by Salwa. Salwa makes a decision that Amba must accept the result of the competition even though it is a painful decision. In this story, Amba, who has been struggling to escape the arranged marriage with Wicitrawirya, dares to refuse the match and comes to see Salwa. In this concept, it is shown that women go to men, not men who come to women. This means that the dominance of men who occupy a separate class is present in the story. Amba conveys her intention to meet Salwa so that Salwa

accepts her back as her lover and can marry, even though Amba has been won by Bhisma. Salwa gave the decision to reject Amba on the grounds of prestige, self-respect. Salwa as a man is more concerned with his own pride to the exclusion of Amba's pride as a woman.

Gender issues arise when Amba is told that she is reborn as a Srikandi and then she is told as a tomboy. This means that to take revenge on Bhisma, Amba will not be able to be in her position as a woman. Amba must have a manly image to be able to beat Bhisma. In this context, the dominating stereotype that women are weak and men are strong is still emphasized. It is said that in order to complete her revenge in the past, Amba, who had been reborn as Srikandi, then turned into a tomboy. This means that there has been a construction that Srikandi as a woman will not be able to beat a man. To beat men, Srikandi, who is Amba's incarnation, must have the image of a man by being a tomboy. Srikandi undergoes a change in appearance by showing signs of being male. In other words, this story does play in the dominant gender construction, that women are subtle and weak, and men who are strong and mighty are dominant constructions that are considered natural. So that the confusion between the two is considered strange, and the oddity can only be accepted in a third gender validation, namely a Tomboy.

Third, impact analysis which is the impact that is felt by women and men fairly and equitably with the guiding question being who gets the greatest impact between women and men from the events that take place? In this story, it is clear that the woman who is described as the character of Dewi Amba is the party who is most unfairly treated by male domination in her life. Even until her next life after being reborn as Srikadi, Amba had to be presented as a tomboy.

CLOSING

First, in the perspective of activity, Dewi Amba's struggle from the kingdom to seize patriarchal hegemony or achieve gender equality has been carried out by her. Amba has prepared a scenario for the contest to convey her wish to Bhisma as the winner of the contest that Amba only likes Salwa. With her intelligence and courage, the character Amba fights against the "royal tradition", she is not completely subject to the rules. Even though all her plans failed. The contest process has proven that this story positions men as strong beings because only men are present as fighters. While Amba is positioned very weakly because women are placed only as recipients of decisions for the victory of the men's fight. Amba is further oppressed when she is rejected by Salwa. Salwa's refusal as her lover is more concerned with prestige than Dewi Amba's love. Second, the control analysis shows that in this context, the dominant stereotype that women are weak and men are strong is still being emphasized. It is said that in order to complete her revenge in the past, Amba who has been reborn as a heroine then turns into a tomboy. This means that there has been a construction that Srikandi as a woman will not be able to beat a man. To beat the men, Srikandi who is the incarnation of Amba must have the image of a man, namely by becoming a tomboy. Third, in this story, it is clear that the woman described by Dewi Amba is the most unfairly treated character by male domination in her life. Even until her next life after being reborn as a Srikandi, Amba had to be presented as a tomboy.

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