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The social discrimination of woman roles in the *Tarian Bumi* and *Kenanga* novels by Oka Rusmini and its relevance to Indonesian learning for twelfth graders at science 1 class SMA negeri 2 Gorontalo (Marxism-literature sociology approach)

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Abstract

Discrimination is differentiating treatments given to citizens. This research explores the social discrimination of Balinese woman figures in *Tarian Bumi* and *Kenanga*, two novels by Oka Rusmini. The research approach was descriptive-qualitative. The results showed that six data were categorized in the upper- and lower-class sections, two data were in the country class section, five data were in the ideology section, and 12 data were in the individual section in *Tarian Bumi* and *Kenanga*. The relevance to learning was educational values in the novel, e.g., religious, moral, social, and cultural values.

Keywords: Discrimination; Balinese Woman; Marxist Sociology; Gorontalo

1. Introduction

Literature is considered part of arts, but it is also considered higher than arts as it intersects with broader experiences than merely being aesthetic. According to Tuloli (2000:2), discussing literature means discussing objects with more connection to the life narrated in a literature work instead of discussing the aesthetic aspects. It is in good agreement with Esten (in Eni, 2017:41) that literature is the expression of artistic and imaginative facts as a human life manifestation. Through literature works, the writer imaginations are presented in beautiful languages. Baruadi (2014:58) argues that a language code is all grammatical knowledge. The language used should be understandable, allowing readers to create a distinctive understanding. Literature works as the form and product of a creative work, fundamentally, are media using language to reveal human life (Rahardjo, 2017:16). A literature work can be ascribed as a mirror to human life or a cultural product delineating the social activities of society represented by characters in a certain setting (Kurniawan, 2012: 3). One of the favorable literature works is novels.

A novel is the literature genre with prose as its main form and written in such a length to fulfill one or two small volumes that can define a real life within a complex plot (Aziez & Hasim, in Didipu 2013:24). Issues in the novel are always represented or described by the story characters. It is in accordance with Ningsih et al. (2015:2) that problems addressed in novels cover those turning up in society experienced by the characters. Several conflicts commonly addressed by novel writers are related to social problems, economy, politics, culture, gender equality, and so on. For example, regarding cultural conflicts, most writers choose topics vis a vis the culture adhered to by society in a specific environment.

Discussing cultural conflicts in novel that are not irrespective of society makes it associated with literature sociology approach. The approach addresses social issues in the social environment. Endraswara (2008:77) conveys that literature sociology is a branch of reflective literature research. The research type is popular among researchers anxious

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to analyze literature as a social life mirror. One of the literature sociology theories, Marxism sociology is famous for the class theory. Class Theory, as proposed by Marx (in Suseno, 2011:110), is a class struggle concept with the background of economic factors grounded on a presumption that the main characters in society are social classes. The social class, by Marx's thinking, is the industrial working class. He regarded the class in its literal meaning. Marx's class theory, basically, contains the subject matters that underlie between-class conflicts. The subject matters embrace four elements, i.e., (a) the difference between upper and lower classes. There are the superior and inferior classes. The upper class is benefitting from its position. They do not have to work as they can earn profits by hiring workers, (b) ideological issues. Ideologies are subject to the superior class because the class legitimates a condition that is supposed not to have legitimacy, (c) class country. A country does not act as an institution regulating its people's welfare. Rather, it is a tool to secure the upper class, and (d) individual issues. Conflicts between upper and lower classes do not hail from envy or egoism. Instead, it stems from objective interests.

Between-class differences can be classified as discrimination. Discrimination is a difference in behaviors given to citizens (on the grounds of skin color, group, ethnicity, economy, religion, and the like). As Banton (in Sunarto, 2004:146) posits, discrimination is giving different treatments to those belonging to a certain class, and accordingly, breeding social distance. Economy-based discrimination breaks out in many Indonesia areas, e.g., Bali. It is in conforming with Septiaji (2017:3) that discrimination is a behavior of differentiating, dividing, or marginalizing individuals or groups living in a society based on their skin color, group, ethnicity, economy, or religion. We have to know that the differences emanate from not only economy but also gender. It is in correspondence with Murnalungito (2016:32) that gender discrimination is a condition in which gender inequality and injustice comes about, bringing about either women or men as victims. It inspires Oka Rusmini, a Balinese female writer, to write some novels addressing woman discrimination in Bali. Among her novels are *Tarian Bumi* in 2007 and *Kenanga* in 2017.

Considered phenomenal and controversial, *Tarian Bumi* explicitly glosses over the feudal life of Balinese noble women. *Kenanga*, addressing Balinese culture conditions, narrates a forbidden love and characters from the Brahmin caste, the highest caste in Bali. Through the novels, Oka Rusmini reveals Bali from another vantage point. She describes Bali from its dark culture and society facets instead of its beautiful face. She also presents several Balinese female characters that are tough, hypocritical, and sadistic. Both novels highlight female characters discriminated by Balinese cultures shining a light on the caste system. The Hindu society underscores color and caste systems as an institutionalized inequality system (Ardika et al., 2013:317). The caste system divides a society into segregated units, and the relationship between units is determined through a rite in one classification form. As Ariviyani (2020:1) remarks, by Hinduism belief, society is clustered by caste. Caste-based society division or grouping is hereditary. As such, the values contained in the system can serve as Indonesian learning materials for senior high school students, such as SMA Negeri 2 Gorontalo, especially twelfth graders at Science 1 class.

2. Method

This research used a descriptive-qualitative approach to find evidence using accurate interpretation. This descriptive research analyzed social discrimination of Balinese women's role in *Tarian Bumi* and *Kenanga* by Oka Rusmini. There were two data employed. The first data were *Tarian Bumi* (177 pages), published by Gramedia Pustaka Utama in 2007 (first printing), and *Kenanga* (272 pages), published by Gramedia Widiasarana Indonesia in 2017 (first printing). The second ones were the results of interview with informants, that were Balinese descendants.

3. Results

The Hindu society underscores color and caste systems as an institutionalized inequality system. The system was different from the color system defined in Weda. The caste system divides a society into segregated units, and the relationship between units is determined through a rite in one classification form. The color system was composed of four categories: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Sudra, that were different from the caste concept. It was the profession group class. To begin with, the Brahmin caste encompassed those that were priest or clergy descendants. The second caste, Kshatriya, comprised king descendants. Meanwhile, the Vaishya caste included those that were merchant descendants. The last caste, Sudra, consisted of those that were descendants of slaves, servants, laborers, and farmers (Wijana, 2006:10).

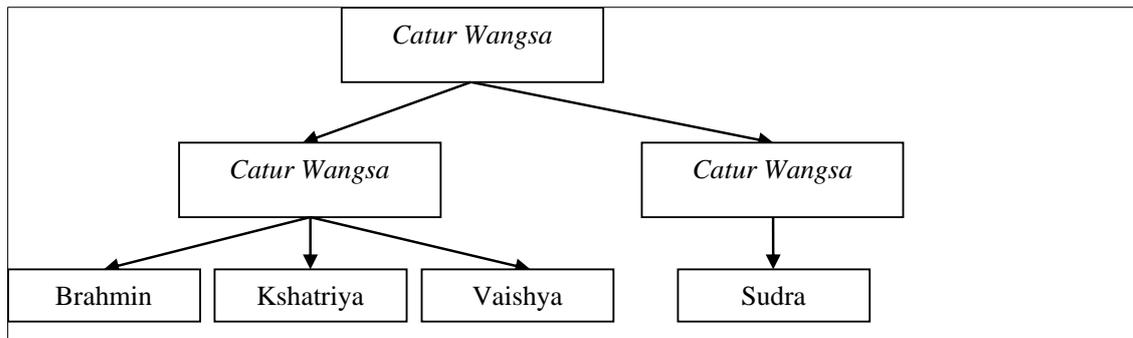


Figure 1 Balinese Caste System

3.1. Social Discrimination of Balinese Women's Role in *Tarian Bumi* and *Kenanga* by Oka Rusmini

Tarian Bumi and *Kenanga* were written by Oka Rusmini. The two novels were written to foreground injustice suffered by minority groups in Bali. The groups were represented by the Sudras the society perceived as servants due to their lower class. Using Bali as the setting, the writer wrote them based on her research and experiences. Building on her boldness, she picked the theme of Balinese women's viewpoints that were constrained by customs and caste. The rebellious female characters in her novels fought against the Balinese tradition applicable to Balinese women. The rebel was manifested in the form of pre-marriage relationship. Marx's concept of class struggle that was motivated by economic factors was grounded on a presumption that the main actors in society were social classes. These classes were perceived as classes in their literal meaning. Marx's class theory, basically, contained the subject matters that underlay between-class conflicts. The subject matters were:

3.1.1. Upper and Lower Classes in *Tarian Bumi*

Tarian Bumi by Oka Rusmini narrated the caste power and cultural stratification reality faced by Balinese women. The storyline focused on a Balinese woman named Jero Kenanga, her life struggle, and Telaga that fought against patriarchy, as defined in the following excerpt.

"Don't take my grandchild, who is a Brahmin, not a Sudra. How could yo do it?! If you often take her to your home, she will not shine nobility. You understand, Kenanga!" Her mother-in-law's voice was shrilling. Sekar was silent.

"Meme is not an Ida Ayu, Tugeg. Meme is an ordinary woman. Meme doesn'y have nobility in her blood. An ordinary woman like Meme will change her name once entering a griya family. Jero Kenangan, that's Meme's new name. A Sudra woman like Meme will change her name once marrying a noble man. The names given by griya families are usually beautiful, flower names, and contain a deep meaning." The woman spoke in a careful tone." (TB.H.61)

The Balinese culture of differentiating upper and lower classes would remain although the woman married a Brahmin man. The reason was that a Brahmin family was maintaining nobility regulations a Sudra woman had to learn. A Sudra woman would continuously be ascribed as a servant in a Brahmin family even though her family respected her after her one level-raised status.

The above excerpt suggested that Sudra women had also socializing boundaries. The upper class's worry of their nobility to fade away if Sudra women could not position themselves as nobles or upper-class members made class difference more affecting Balinese women.

The phenomena demonstrated by the above excerpt were still found in Bali. And yet, they were slightly different. Currently, Sudra women marrying Brahmin descendants were allowed to visit their houses and families. Strict prohibitions related to the visitation were only applicable during the royal era.

3.1.2. Upper and Lower Classes in *Kenanga*

As narrated in *Kenanga* by Oka Rusmini, a Sudra woman would have her name changed if marrying a Brahmin man, as what ensued to Luh Putu Arimbi that had her name changed and got the title "Jero". The event was indicated by the following excerpt.

“You even want me marrying a Brahmin. How could it happen, Queen? Don’t you know I am a wang jero, and a wang jero must know herself?”

The Brahmins are the sun. My place is becoming their servant. It isn’t them who should respect me as you want. It reverses, Queen. I know, indeed, sometimes they’re too arrogant. However, isn’t it a standard in our society? Why do you question it for the sake of a Sudra woman like me?!” (NK.H.124)

The above excerpt shows a significant difference between Sudra and Brahmin classes. The latter class was the upper, respected class, whereas the first was the lower one. Sudra women were not permitted to make a choice. These classes incarnated as the highest barrier wall for Balinese woman desiring for justice, as narrated by Oka Rusmini through her novels.

The information I collected justified the existence of the prohibition, whereby it was forbidden for a Sudra woman to make a choice with regard to a Brahmin man. Only the second party, that was the Brahmin, had the right for making that choice. In so doing, many Balinese women married with men they might not be in love with. They were willing to marry as they respected the *griya* or Brahmin class. And yet, the sense interpretation was different today, where a Sudra woman was permitted to refuse an undesired marriage. This stipulation was applicable to Balinese people that no longer lived in Bali. That is, when they decided to leave Bali, they could choose.

3.1.3. Class Country in *Tarian Bumi*

Cultural diversity in Indonesia suggested the impact of cultures on women. In the first novel of Oka Rusmini, *Tarian Bumi*, she describes the influence of Balinese cultures on Balinese women’s roles. The cultures set a boundary for women due to different social classes. The following excerpt defined the class country in Bali.

“After legally marrying Ida Bagus Ngurah Pidada, Luh Sekar had to leave her family and routines. Besides changing her name to Jero (the name of women marrying noble men) Kenanga, she had to leave all people raising her.

The first pain she had to bear was that she should no longer use the name Ni Luh Sekar. She had to get accustomed to her new name, Jero Kenanga. It was a name she was referred to. It was a name she should introduce to her breath as her new breath. Ni Luh Sekar, the Sudra woman, had gone. Now, she had started her reincarnation of becoming a noble. Later, after she died, her spirit would incarnate in the body of a Brahmin.

The woman could not pray in the sanggah, her family’s temple. She could not eat fruit that had been offered to her family’s ancestors.

All had changed. The language spoken by an old woman with myopic eyes and senile memories that gave birth to Luh Sekar had to change. She had to venerate her daughter because her level was lower than her daughter’s. Luh Dalem, Luh Sekar’s mother, had to treat her daughter specially. Luh Sekar was now different from her other daughters. Sekar was forbidden to eat together. She could not eat leftovers. All changed. All should be learned from the beginning.

Those were the sacrifices made by a woman named Luh Sekar. She had to leave not only her old habits, but also the world that had assisted her to refine her female being. The woman should begin to form a new world.” (TB.H.54-55)

The above excerpt elucidated that *Tarian Bumi* contained a class country. For instance, Luh Sekar married with a Brahmin man named Ida Bagus Ngurah Pidada. A legal marriage was legalized by the religion and government. It was in conforming with Marx’s theory, that a country was not an institution ruling its people’s well-being. Instead, it acted as a tool to secure the upper class. The upper/noble class would always achieve complacency. As demonstrated in the excerpt above, Luh Sekar’s willingness to marry was not based on love. Rather, she was itching to change her economic status, leading to her being scorned by her husband’s family.

Our interview results justified the phenomena. Balinese women, due to their social status, were willing to marry Brahmin men they did not love. In short, the marriage was solely based on caste. The phenomenon told in *Tarian Bumi* still existed until today. There was one datum from *Kenanga* and one other from *Tarian Bumi* by Oka Rusmini. The data was included in the class country section as there was a distinctive Balinese culture that compared the Brahmins and Sudras.

3.1.4. Class Country in Kenanga

One of Karl Marx's theories remarked that a country was literally a class country. That is, the country was directly or indirectly ruled by the classes ruling the economy. It was inflated in Indonesia, and thereby including Bali. Bali nurtured a culture that perceived part of groups by levels. Oka Rusmini, in writing *Kenanga*, was referencing the culture. The following excerpts justifying the existence of a class country in Indonesia, specifically Bali.

"How it was good to be a man. Women were queuing and waiting, expecting to get little attention. Meanwhile, how pity young women in this griya family were. They had to lure men from the same caste, no matter how special the women are.

An Ida Ayu woman was obliged to have an Ida Bagus lover. Where did the rule come from? Who spread it? However, the rule does not apply otherwise. Griya men could freely choose whom they were married to. Even many Ida Ayu women were willing to be the second or third wives in order not to be by-level downgraded. What was the level? What kind of pride was being upheld? What kind of life was that? (NK.H.188).

The excerpt included in the class country as the rule was agreed instead of being hidden. The rule applicable in Bali was known in this country. Indonesian people were well aware of the existence of Bali laden with Hinduism as a religion and its culture. The country did not give any comment with respect to rules discriminating women. Only the subordinate society like Sudras commented on the rules, but their comments were obviously abandoned by the country. The upper class's voice was the only voice listened to by the country. These phenomena in Bali brought about the assumption of the existence of the class country system in Indonesia, especially in Bali.

Women from the Sudra class were prohibited from rejecting Brahmin men descendants' proposals. Meanwhile, an Ida Ayu from the Brahmins could not marry a Sudra man in spite of their love. We also addressed this topic when finding informants. Informants justified the information that many Balinese women married by caste rather by love. Even till today, the phenomenon as exhibited in the above excerpt was still cultivated in Bali although the way to remind others was not openly in public.

3.1.5. Ideology in Tarian Bumi

Tarian Bumi, narrating a story of Balinese cultures and a female character named Telaga, also provided an excerpt as data on ideologies. The following excerpt acts as the relevant data.

"She had to still hold a ceremony in order to be a Sudra woman. Patiwangi. Pati meant dead, wangi meant fragrance. This time, Telaga had to kill the name Ida Ayu that had given her life. The name had to been used anymore. It was inappropriate. It just brought a bad luck for others!

Before the woman stepped on her crown, Telaga wanted that her mother did it. Since her birth, the woman had respected her as a noble. She did not want another woman stepping on her body to downgrade her level. To urge her body to be willing to skin off her nobility. Telaga endeavored to hold her anxiety." (TB.H.172-175)

The excerpt was data on ideologies. Telaga, a Brahmin woman, marrying a Sudra man named Wayan resulting in her caste downgrading. The Balinese rule obliged that caste-downgraded women should hold a *patiwangi* ceremony to kill the name Ida Ayu Telaga. Telaga was forbidden from using the name Ida Ayu when she decided to marry a Sudra. The customary rule was applicable to all women in Bali.

According the information we gathered, the *patiwangi* ceremony were held by the Balinese society until today and would be until later. The ceremony was targeted to Brahmin women downgraded to Sudra. This culture would be less noticeable if the Balinese society lived together and mingled with other societies from other areas. And yet, when we entered in a certain area in which most of the society living there were Balinese, this culture would be more observable.

The data above included in the data on ideology. As Marx stated in his theory, it was a rule made by the upper class to achieve a better culture while the rule made the lower class more subordinate to the first class. That was Marx's idea of what ideology was. One datum from *Kenanga* and two from *Tarian Bumi* by Oka Rusmini included in the ideology part.

3.1.6. Ideology in Kenanga

An ideology was a teaching describing a condition, especially of power structures, in such a way that people considered it legitimate when the fact was not. It served the superior class interest as the class gave legitimation to a condition that actually had no legitimation. A critique to an ideology was one of the Marx's salient contributions to the analysis of

power structures in society. It was in correspondence with the story in *Kenanga* that rules in the Balinese culture were made by the upper class. Accordingly, they would be auspicious only for the class. The following excerpt was taken from *Kenanga*.

"It was a common custom at griya. Hard-working children who were poor and could not afford schools were often handed by their parents to be servants at griya and as offerings and symbols of loyalty to the nobles. The belief suggested that dedicating life to griya would give joy, welfare, and ancestors' protection." (NK. H.5).

The custom was firmly entrenched in Bali that children of Sudra descendants should serve at *griya* as the manifestation of their respect to the Brahmins and their compliance with God. The above excerpt demonstrated the class ideology in Balinese cultures, whereby a rule was made for the sake of the interest or welfare of the Brahmins instead of for the sake of justice for all Balinese people.

3.1.7. Individuals in *Tarian Bumi*

Tarian Bumi narrated Balinese cultures and women. As told in the novel, there were several situations exhibited caste discrimination by individuals or to individuals. Discrimination was also noticeable in the name difference between castes. The address *Ida Ayu* was for Brahmin women, and *Ida Bagus* was for Brahmin men. *Luh* was the address for Sudra women, and *Wayan* was for Sudra men. The caste-based name differences are indicated in the following excerpt.

"Jero was the name for a Sudra woman that had become a griya family member. Meanwhile, Kenanga was the name of a flower that emitted more fragrance when getting older. Telaga loved the fragrance emitted by the petals. The fragrance was odd.

The name given by the griya elders to Luh Sekar was suitable. Telaga often thought that the name borne by her mother described her life burden. She had to borne more burdens day after day: father problems, grandmother problems, and grandfather problems. How it was hard to a woman. It was so painful! (TB.H.62)

The address *Jero* was referred to Sudra women with a social status upgraded to Brahmins. The name changing was real and practiced until today. The rule was absolute and could not be amended as it had long existed. This name changing made Brahmin parents persistently reminded their daughters to pick men from the same caste.

3.1.8. Individuals in *Kenanga*

Conflicts between the upper and lower classes was not as a result of jealousy or egoism. Instead, they were products of objective interest. Marx explained some seminal matters through his theory. To begin with, the significant economic and power roles because of their interest were determined by their positions. Additionally, the upper class had no desire for changes as they had life established on their wealth. It brought on them retaining their status as the upper-class members. Moreover, the lower class was desperately anxious to changes as they perceived oppression and that a change or revolution was the only way to make them developed. Finally, the lower class, that had long sensed oppression, maintained a whim of conquering the upper one. However, the upper consistently retained their power roles as the upper one. That being so, social changes were only possible through revolution.

All human beings desired changes, particularly better social ones. It was narrated in *Kenanga*. A Brahmin woman was itching to hire *Luh Intan* as her maid at home to benefit from *Luh Intan*, a Sudra descendant. The following excerpt explained the situation.

"Kenanga, Kenanga. I have never seen a Jero so petiles ibe and self-conscious like Luh Intan. She helps me in majejahitan (a main prepared the ceremony equipment). How skillful she is. If you don't mind, I will take care of her and give her formal education." (NK. H.3)

The intention to own someone to earn advantages had been defined by Marx in the individual section. The section described the act of using an object to prevent lose and to maintain nobility levels. Earning advantages, a Brahmin took a Sudra child and make the child as a servant in her house. She would pay the child. In Brahmin customs, the Sudras could only be their servants at *griya*.

Informants justified the data. The phenomenon as exhibited in the above excerpt broke out in the Balinese society. The Brahmins lived at *griya*, and the Sudras lived in ordinary houses. In addition, Brahmin descendants often looked for *wong jero* (maids/servants from Sudra descendants) and raised them since childhood to make them habitually respect

the Brahmins. Nevertheless, after 100 years passed, the rule was inapplicable. Either the Brahmins or Sudras could hire household assistants if they retained good finance.

3.2. Relevance of *Tarian Bumi* and *Kenanga* by Oka Rusmini to Learning at SMA Negeri 2 Gorontalo

Through learning literature, students would learn how to appreciate literature. Literature teaching at schools provided students opportunities to acquire literature-related experiences, and thereby propelling them to appreciate literature.

Tarian Bumi and *Kenanga* were two novels considered contributive as learning materials for the Indonesian subject at senior high schools because of educational values they contained. The values were brought by the main character, Intan, a Brahmin woman caste downgraded to Sudra. It could be integrated into one of the learning materials for twelfth graders at SMA Negeri 2 Gorontalo. The teaching materials were implicitly mentioned in Basic Competencies (KD) in the 2013 Curriculum of 2016 revision, i.e., KD 3.3 Reviewing language content and elements of a novel and KD 4.3 Presenting a review of the language content and elements of a novel in a book review activity orally or in written. Language content and educational values brought by the novels' characters could act as learning materials.

To examine the relevance of the two novels to Indonesian learning, we chose twelfth graders at Science 1 Class to be investigated with the following steps: a) students were given the explanation of the novels and their intrinsic and extrinsic elements, b) students were instructed to read the two novels, c) students began to observe intrinsic and extrinsic elements, e.g., the theme, plot, setting, perspective, character/characteristics, language style, and messages, in *Kenanga* and *Tarian Bumi* by Oka Rusmini, and d) students searched the Internet for Balinese culture information to understand the novels' sentences and words they were confused of. In the learning process, students indicated enthusiasm and kept asking the relationship between the novels, considering that *Kenanga* and *Tarian Bumi* were both written by an author and that the novels' content glossed over Balinese women and cultures.

Students positively responded to the learning and showed enthusiasm when learning novels addressing one of the cultures in Indonesia, i.e., the Balinese culture. Therefore, *Kenanga* and *Tarian Bumi* by Oka Rusmini enabled students to learn the values of life, morals, cultures, and how to socialize. Besides, learning the novels containing aesthetic language of literature could boost the students' spirit for reading. Students could also learn how to venerate differences and understand cultures in Indonesia.

4. Conclusion

Data found through this research were (1) three data from *Kenanga* and three others from *Tarian Bumi* by Oka Rusmini acted as data explicating the existence of the upper and lower classes. The data suggested differences between two groups, i.e., the Brahmins as the upper class and the Sudras as the lower one, (2) a datum from *Kenanga* and one from *Tarian Bumi* by Oka Rusmini served as data demonstrating the existence of a class country maintaining distinctive Balinese cultures that compared the Brahmins and Sudras, (3) data on ideology defined by Marx as a rule made by the upper class to realize a better culture yet in fact, it made the lower class servants for the upper one. A datum from *Kenanga* and two data from *Tarian Bumi* by Oka Rusmini exhibited this ideology, and (4) there were data from *Kenanga* and *Tarian Bumi* by Oka Rusmini illuminating individuals as defined by Marx. Individuals here were referred to as those experiencing social discrimination by Balinese cultures. Seven relevant data were taken from *Kenanga* and described through the character Intan, and five others were taken from *Tarian Bumi* and described through the characters Luh Sekar and Telaga.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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