

“TRI HITA KARANA” LIFE IDEOLOGY AS A CULTURAL IDENTITY OF BALINESE SOCIETY REFLECTED IN ELIZABETH GILBERT’S *EAT PRAY LOVE* (Anthropological Approach In Literature)

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Abstract. This research paper discusses the everyday life ideology of Balinese society popularly called “*Tri Hita Karana*” as a local cultural identity reflected in a literary work of Elizabeth Gilbert’s *Eat Pray Love* by using anthropological approach in literature. The result of the research indicates that Balinese society culturally applies and strongly relies on “*Tri Hita Karana*” life ideology to live a life on the basis of three sources of happiness. This life ideology continually becomes the typical-local-cultural identity of Balinese people since it evidently gives them happiness and prosperity. Balinese society really believes in “*Tri Hita Karana*” life ideology covering three concepts of balanced harmonious relationship, that is, “*parahyangan*”, “*pawongan*”, and “*palemahan*”. “*Parahyangan*” concept emphasizes on a harmonious relationship between humans and God, “*pawongan*” concept refers to a harmonious relationship between humans and humans, and “*palemahan*” concept refers to a harmonious relationship between humans and nature. In relation to “*parahyangan*” concept, Balinese society obediently performs some religious practices, several traditional rituals, and certain offering ceremonies. In connection with “*pawongan*” concept, Balinese people sincerely build up a good relationship by cooperating with others in many aspects of social life. Referring to “*palemahan*” concept, Balinese people maintain the nature around well, keep the environment clean, preserve the green forest, and conserve a lot of protected animals.

1. Background of the Research

Every culture in any part of the world has its own typical cultural identity which differs entirely from other cultures. Cultural identity refers to a specific characteristic of a culture belonging to a certain society with a well-recognized limitation scope if it is compared to a characteristic of other cultures. Each culture surely takes a pride of its cultural identity. By having its cultural identity, people as the owner of a certain culture will live the way and feel the nuance of the cultural identity as part of their every-day life. The concept of cultural identity will affect much on society in their way of thinking, their way of doing, their way of behaving, as well as their way of interacting with God, humans, and environments. One of the well-renowned cultural identities in Indonesia is belonging to Balinese society namely, “*Tri Hita Karana*” which is considered as Balinese life ideology.

“*Tri Hita Karana*” life ideology is a Balinese local philosophy that bases on a harmonious life balance of humans. This local ideology emphasizes on humans’ happiness and prosperity, more than that, it functions in preserving and maintaining a traditional culture amidst a modern life this present time. “*Tri Hita Karana*”, for Balinese people, is principally a worthy, glorious teaching concept stressing on three harmonious relationships of humans in worldly life, namely, the relationship between humans and God, humans and humans, and humans and nature. Each aspect of relationship has a life guidance to appreciate other aspects around. This “*Tri Hita Karana*” is intended to be implemented by Balinese society to live a happy, prosperous life. This life ideology implies three causes of humans’ prosperity and happiness whose underlying sources are rooted from those three relationships. “*Tri Hita Karana*” is strongly recommended to apply in daily life since it presents a life balanced prosperity and happiness. Absolutely, it is strikingly different from a modern life ideology that prioritizes on individualism, materialism, and hedonism. As globalization spreads all over the world, modern life ideology tries to replace this local Balinese ideology.

Balinese people believe and apply “Tri Hita Karana” as a life ideology which originally comes from the concept of “*parahyangan*”, “*pawongan*”, and “*palemahan*”. “*Parahyangan*” concept emphasizes on a harmonious relationship between humans and God, “*pawongan*” concept refers to a harmonious relationship between humans and humans, and “*palemahan*” concept refers to a harmonious relationship between humans and nature. “Tri Hita Karana” lexically comes from the word “Tri” which means three, “Hita” means prosperity, and “Karana” means the cause. This life ideology emerges along with Balinese culture and the religion of Hinduism believed by local Balinese people. The combination of three elements of “Tri Hita Karana” will harmoniously make people life feel pleasant, peaceful, and happy physically and spiritually.

The phenomena of “Tri Hita Karana” life ideology are also reflected in a literary work of Elizabeth Gilbert’s *Eat Pray Love*. This novel tells a woman named Liz as the main character who has herself tried to find happiness after her shattered household by visiting Italy, India, and Bali, Indonesia. In Italy, the woman finds happiness physically by enjoying the cities and the foods. In India, the woman finds happiness spiritually by enjoying gymnastics “yoga”. Meanwhile, in Bali, Indonesia, the woman finds much happiness by enjoying religious offering ceremonies, traditional medication, togetherness among Balinese people, natural beauty, man’s love and affection, and many other local cultures. In closely interacting with Balinese people, the woman, Liz, finds a harmonious life balance physically and spiritually which is based on Tri Hita Karana derived and learned from traditional Balinese people.

2. Method of Research

2.1 Research Approach

Based on the background of the research that reveals “Tri Hita Karana” life ideology as cultural identity phenomena of Balinese society reflected in a literary work of Elizabeth Gilbert’s *Eat Pray Love*, the researcher uses anthropological approach in literature or literary anthropology approach to analyze such related phenomena in the novel. Anthropological approach in literature is a perspective of research which emphasizes on ethnography to analyze cultural aspects in a certain society in literary works [1]. It is also stated that anthropological approach in literature is a study of literary work in relation to conceptual, interactional, and physical cultures that people produce in a certain community, such as belief, religion, law, myth, custom, language, and so on [2]. The substance of anthropological approach in literature is analyzing characteristics of a culture in a literary work.

2.2 Method of Data Collection

Method of data collection is conducted to analyze a literary work of Elizabeth Gilbert’s *Eat Pray Love* by using library research. Library research is research which is conducted in a working room or a library of a researcher to obtain data and information related to the object of the research through books, or any other audio-visual appliances [3]. The researcher uses a literary work of Elizabeth Gilbert’s *Eat Pray Love* novel as primary data of the research, while secondary data are taken from any other related written sources functioned as supporting data, such as reference textbooks, journals, articles, and so forth.

3. Discussion

3.1 Tri Hita Karana: “*Parahyangan*” Concept of Balancing Human-and-God Relationship

As people who believe in the existence of God, Balinese society keeps on adhering the religious teaching by doing a God serving and certain rituals to make their life in peace and happiness. They have performed the obligation as God creatures by worshipping in a temple or a little shrine, giving religious servings in front of their house, cleaning and sweeping the temples, doing a certain ritual for a certain happening, keep away God’s prohibitions, and so on. The spiritual interaction between humans and God in the form of religious ceremonies is reflected in Elizabeth Gilbert’s *Eat Pray Love* novel as follows:

“Religious ceremonies are of paramount importance here in Bali (an island, don’t forget, with seven unpredictable volcanoes on it—you would pray, too). It has been estimated that a typical Balinese woman spends one-third of her waking hours either preparing for a ceremony, participating in a ceremony or cleaning up after a ceremony. Life here is a constant cycle of offering and rituals.”

(Gilbert [4])

Based on the quotation, it can be analyzed that the relationship between Balinese people and their God is really meaningful to them and cannot be separated from daily life. This relationship is considered very important to maintain as a source of life happiness as well as a cultural identity that they can take pride in. The quotation also shows that a Balinese woman gets involved in varied religious activities the same way as men. Balinese men and women have a similarity of interaction in rituals as the ancestors have done. Balinese people have a lot of religious ceremonies to show a sincere obedience, self-dependence, and gratitude to God. There are some ceremonies that must be performed five times a day, once a day, once a week, once a month, once a year, once every ten years, once every thousand years. All the dates of rituals are well-organized by holy men to be performed in keeping with God relationship.

The implementation of Balinese concept “parahyangan” is also reflected in the conversation between the main character, Liz, and the Balinese local medicine man, Ketut Liyer, when the woman gets the first lesson in Balinese meditation, finding God, and doing “yoga”. Meditation can be meant as an activity which is commonly performed by sitting in silence like a hermit by Balinese people with many reasons of convictions to look for self-serenity. Finding God for Balinese society is an easy thing that can be performed through meditation. The Balinese medicine man reveals that western people are too complicated when trying to believe in God. “Yoga” for Balinese people is the reflection of finding peace, tranquility, happiness and the self-unity by listening to oneself that humans-God relationship should be derived with a smile. To do meditation, the main character of the novel, Liz, is taught a lesson by Ketut Liyer in order to be calm, happy, and sincere in dealing with God. An intensive searching for the relationship with God gives someone the feeling of happiness when practicing meditation and yoga. Sincere smile and happy countenance have to be done as a mind reflection to produce a good energy when one is doing meditation and yoga. Humans-God relationship can actually be realized in the form of paying an honor to the belief values of rituals that cause life as worship cycle.

3.2 Tri Hita Karana: “Pawongan” Concept of Balancing Human-and-Human Relationship

In every-day life humans is unavoidably getting along with others as social creatures. The social ability to have a good interaction determines a person to live a happy life with others in a certain society. Conversely, the inability to have a harmonious relationship with other people will lead a person to living an unpleasant life. In line with human-and-God relationship, “pawongan” concept emphasizing on a harmonious relationship between humans and humans is also very pivotal for Balinese people. This is because such a harmonious relationship will affect on togetherness of Balinese society while they are working on religious ceremonies, political and economic decisions, as well as agricultural matters for mutual prosperity as reflected in Elizabeth Gilbert’s *Eat Pray Love*:

“Rice terraces require an unbelievable amount of shared labor, maintenance and engineering in order to prosper, so each Balinese village has a banjar—a united organization of citizens who administer, through consensus, the village’s political and economic and religious and agricultural decisions. In Bali, the collective is absolutely more important than individual, or nobody eats.”

(Gilbert [4])

Based on the quotation, it can be concluded that Balinese people put living in togetherness harmoniously as the soul of their life. They cannot live individually to achieve prosperity since mutual togetherness determines Balinese people to eat. They have a strong conviction that living a life either happily or sadly should be passed through in togetherness. Togetherness among Balinese people as a source of happiness and prosperity especially those who live in a village. The philosophy of eating together or not eating together becomes a cultural slogan and identity for them. With such a cultural identity, Balinese people can live a balanced life through a vertical relationship with God and a horizontal relationship with others. If those two kinds of relationships are not balanced, they will lose power of happiness on earth.

Living in togetherness as the application of “pawongan” concept is also reflected in family life of Balinese society. They live around the walled family environment of many relatives with each traditional family compound from generation to generation of siblings, cousins, parents, grandparents as well as children. All of them live together in a series of small bungalows surrounding the family temple. They help each other in anything and take care of each other from birth to death. It indicates that Balinese people in a family unit really depend on and rely on each other to live. Living together in a family compound for Balinese people is the source of life strength, financial stability, health care, day care, education, and spiritual connection. Family bond seems so strong physically, psychologically, and spiritually that they have to keep for the main family happiness and the kinship prosperity. This shows a precious value reflected in human-and-human relationship in the scope of family.

Balinese people are also well-known for their kindness and friendliness when dealing with others. They respect and welcome other people warmly when they visit Balinese people's house or elsewhere in Bali. This graciousness is reflected in Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat Pray Love* when the main character, Liz, meets Balinese people in Ubud to enjoy her life adventure to find true happiness and love. She said that she does not only like the rented house around nature of Ubud, but also, she loves all people in Bali who have been very gracious to her without exception. This indicates that Balinese people maintain good relationship with other people although they are not originally from Bali.

3.3 Tri Hita Karana: "Palemahan" Concept of Balancing Human-and-Nature Relationship

The last important relationship for Balinese society in the concept of Tri Hita Karana is "*palemahan*" which means the relationship between human and nature. Balinese people love living with nature including forests, rice fields, mountains, plantation, and bank of river because, to them, nature evidently give many beneficial things for daily needs, agriculture, cattle, medication, and so on. Balinese people learn what to do and what they do not have to do with nature around. The closeness with nature helps Balinese people learn changing seasons, such as rainy season and dry season, as knowledge concept of nature for agricultural method to make rice terrace and plant rice seeds. With the knowledge concept they learn from nature, Balinese society plants the seeds of rice in the right moment and expects to have a successful harvest of rice for everyday staple food. The majority of traditional Balinese people have reaped a great success as rice farmers.

Balinese people also learn a knowledge concept mastery on various kinds of vegetations around. Vegetation knowledge is very important for Balinese people to make their daily life easier, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, traditional medication, and so forth. Bamboo tree, for instance, is functioned to make various bamboo beds for sleep, teak woods for wooden tables, rice for staple food, banana tree for dessert consumption, banana leaf for traditional food wraps, and palm leaves called lontars for traditional book as reflected in Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat Pray Love* when the main character, Liz, is talking with Ketut Liyer, a traditional medicine man as follows:

"So now I must be a medicine man. Now I have to learn medical books from great grandfather. These books not made on paper, made on palm leaves. Called lontars. This is Balinese medicine encyclopedia. I must learn all different plants on Bali. Not easy. One by one. I learn everything. I learn to take care of people with many problems. One problem is when someone is sick from physical. I help this physical sick with herbs. Other problem is when family is sick, when family always fighting. I help this with harmony..."

(Gilbert [4])

Based on the quotation, it can be concluded that Balinese people learn traditional knowledge about various plants and leaves for a traditionally medical healing. Balinese people also have medicine encyclopedia that can be learned to heal some sickness or other kinds of sickness suffered physically or magically by people. Balinese people show a good relationship with nature by considering nature as part of their life to be used wisely. They have a wise interaction with nature by keeping and living a harmonious life in the environment around. This can be analyzed based on the mutual commitment of Balinese society to maintain a life balance with nature including vegetation and animal. Friendly life and mutual advantage concept between human and nature becomes the basic principle for Balinese people to act, to treat, to protect, and to preserve the surrounding natural environment. They show a good attitude with a concern for the trees having long been planted in order not to be carelessly cut down for the sake of mutual prosperity. Balinese people also try hard keep the environment clean, preserve the green forest, and conserve a lot of protected animals.

4. Conclusion

Balinese society as reflected in Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat Pray Love* has Tri Hita Karana as life ideology which guides them to have three harmonious life relationship. Tri Hita Karana becomes the typical-local-cultural identity of Balinese people since it gives them happiness and prosperity. Balinese society really believes in "*Tri Hita Karana*" life ideology covering three concepts of balanced harmonious relationship, that is, "*parahyangan*", "*pawongan*", and "*palemahan*". "*Parahyangan*" concept emphasizes on a harmonious relationship between humans and God, "*pawongan*" concept refers to a harmonious relationship between humans and humans, and "*palemahan*" concept refers to a harmonious relationship between humans and nature. Related to "*parahyangan*" concept, Balinese society obediently performs some religious practices, several traditional rituals, and certain offering ceremonies. In connection with "*pawongan*" concept, Balinese people sincerely build up a good relationship by cooperating with others in many

aspects of social and family life. Referring to “*palemahan*” concept, Balinese people maintain the nature around well, keep the environment clean, preserve the green forest, and conserve a lot of protected animals.

The research on Balinese cultural identity through Elizabeth Gilbert’s *Eat Pray Love* will give many positive thoughts and contributions to the global community to better understand the ways to learn Tri Hita Karana as a local wisdom and to live a harmonious and peaceful life by building a balanced relationship with God, humans, and nature. With this research implication, global community is encouraged not to exploit and destroy the surrounding nature for the sake of their own interest or other interests of certain related parties. This research will hopefully broaden the scope of knowledge to study literary works, either novel, novella, short story, drama, or poetry from the perspective of literary anthropology.

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