# **CHAPTER I**

# **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will provide an overview of the research, including the background of the study, the identification of the problem, the limitation of the study, the research problems, the objective of the study, and the significance of the study.

## **1.1. Background of the Study**

Indonesia is a country with thousands of islands and a variety of ethnicities. These led to the appearance of cultures, languages, and literary fields in Indonesia such as folklore. As a part of both the cultural and literary field, folklore generally arises from reality and is presented from generation to generation verbally. However, with the intention to defend its existence, folk stories have been written and published through various types of media. Furthermore, as time passes, folklore is also used as teaching media in the education field, such as teaching life morals and cultures to the students.

On the other hand, folklore also indirectly portrays the ideas, notions, and social issues, that are mostly related to human nature. Generally, social issues, for instance, are related to women–since they have become a gender that had many oppressions by societies. In some folklore, women are mostly seen as inanimate objects or the ones who are seen as equal to other inanimate objects such as plants. Women as humans and plants as part of nature are considered equal by societies. Women are known for being closer to nature than men are. This means that both women and nature can easily be controlled, dominated, and utilized by the one who holds more power than them. It also means their equality is shown through their similarity when women utilized their wombs to get pregnant and have an infant. Plants are growing until they produce things to fulfill human needs.

According to this, folklore that shows the interrelation between women and plants (nature) is reflected in three selected folklores of Asal-usul: Bunga Rampai Cerita Rakyat Sumatera Utara by Tengku Syarfina and Agus Mulia. Those selected folklores are entitled with Asal Mula Padi, Asal Mula Pulut, and Asal Mula Sagu. The folklores are about the origin of staple foods, such as rice and sago. Which are also related to Indonesia as an agrarian country. Most of the origin stories happened through the incarnation of the women into plants in order to overcome the long drought and famine, and also to introduce staple food such as rice.

Si Beru Dayang in Asal Mula Padi was sent down to the Karo people as a big fruit which was then cut off into pieces and planted until they grew into rice plants following the order by Dewa. Gadis Kramat in Asal Mula Pulut sent by the father to come to the land called Negeri Sicike-cike with other six women. They turned into rice plants as they fell asleep. All except Gadis Kramat who turned back into a human and became the one who provided the rice for the people to overcome famine. Lastly is Rumbia in Asal Mula Sagu. Rumbia willed herself to sacrifice to help the Uluan village from a long drought and famine. She turned into a big tree which was then cut off into pieces. Some pieces are produced to become sago and bread, some pieces are planted so all of the Uluan people have the tree and the number of the trees increases. The presence of women in these three folklores shows their struggle against disasters that hit their lands. Their struggle went through them being sacrificed by being incarnated into plants and providing staple foods. These three folklores are getting more interesting since the women's movements in overcoming long drought and famine are controlled and decided by men, which is according to their higher position, they could actually have much more power to handle the environment problems than women had. They made the women transform into objects not as subjects. Furthermore, the interrelation between women's issues in feminism with nature has arisen the concept of ecofeminism, where it concentrates on women and nature issues.

Therefore, in order to explore the connection between women and plants in *Asal Mula Padi, Asal Mula Pulut,* and *Asal Mula Sagu,* the folklore should be analyzed by employing the perspective of ecofeminism, considering ecofeminism views that women are culturally linked to nature, that there is relation between the oppression to nature and the oppression to women. Moreover, from an ecofeminist perspective, there are conceptual, symbolic and linguistic connections between feminism and ecological issues (Wiyatmi, 2019). Therefore, this research of *Asal Mula Padi, Asal Mula Pulut,* and *Asal Mula Sagu* is entitled with *Ecofeminism in Selected Folklore of Asal-usul: Bunga Rampai Cerita Rakyat Sumatera Utara.*

## **1.2. Identification of the Problem**

As delivered in the background of the research above. Some folklore portrayed social issues that are mostly related to women. Since women usually seen as equal with inanimate objects, for instance plants. This kind of problem is also appeared in three folklores in Asal-usul: Bunga Rampai Cerita Rakyat Sumatera Utara written by Tengku Syarfina and Agus Mulia in 2015. These folklores, that are entitled with Asal Mula Padi, Asal Mula Pulut, and Asal Mula Sagu are about the origin of the main staple foods in Indonesia consist of rice and sago.

In these selected folklores, all of the women incarnated into plants to introduce rice or overcome long drought and famine. Yet, women's movements to overcome the drought and famine are controlled and decided by men, who have greater power in dealing with environmental problems than women. They make women transform into objects, not subjects. Therefore, regarding the problem, it is important to explore the connection between women and plants in Asal Mula Padi, Asal Mula Pulut, and Asal Mula Sagu by employing the perspective of ecofeminism, where the oppression against women is equal to the oppression of nature.

## **1.3. Limitation of the Study**

Based on Asal-usul: Bunga Rampai Cerita Rakyat Sumatera Utara, this research will only choose three folklores including Asal Mula Padi, Asal Mula Pulut, and Asal Mula Sagu. The choosing process is encouraged by the similarities between them which are the stories that tell about the origin of staple food. Also, the women are all incarnated into plants. The research will only focus on the female characters including Si Beru Dayang, Gadis Keramat, and Rumbia. This research will seek their figure in folklore and their relation with the environment as they are incarnated into plants by employing the perspective of ecofeminism.

## **1.4. Research Problems**

Related to the research background and limitation of the research previously, these are the research problems that aim to be answered through the research, including:

1. How are women figures to the environment as they are incarnated into plants in folklore?
2. How is ecofeminism portrayed in folklore related to their incarnation into plants?

## **1.5. Objective of the Study**

The objective of the research will be related to the research problems. The main objectives to be obtained in the research are:

1. To identify the women figures to the environment in folklore as they are incarnated into plants.
2. To identify ecofeminism portrayed in folklore related to their incarnation into plants?

## **1.6. Significance of the Study**

This research will be carried out sequentially to obtain theoretical advantages and practical advantages. The main points of these types of advantages are as follows:

1. Theoretical Advantages
2. Throughout the research, it can broaden the researcher’s insight towards the topic of the research which is ecofeminism.
3. The result of the research can examine and identify the portrayal of the problems in detail, primarily the female figures in folklore that are also connected to the existence of ecofeminism.
4. Practical Advantages
5. The style of the research will become the references and orientation for further research that studies similar genres of literary works, especially in researching Indonesian folklore and related problems such as ecofeminism.
6. The result of the research can encourage further researchers to appreciate Indonesian folklore more by doing the research towards the folklore itself.