

## Representation of Contemporary Balinese Women in the Symbol of Rangda: Perspectives from the Lontar Calonarang and Usadha Taru Premana through Ethnography

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the representation of women in Balinese culture through the symbols of Rangda and Usadha Taru Premana, which depict the duality of women's roles in Balinese society. The symbol of Rangda, found in the Lontar Calonarang, depicts women as strong and destructive figures who rebel against injustice. In contrast, the symbol in the Lontar Usadha Taru Premana depicts women as guardians of balance and healers, playing an important role in maintaining the physical and spiritual harmony of society. These two symbols reflect the complexity of Balinese women's identity, which is respected in both spiritual and social contexts but also viewed ambivalently in a patriarchal society. A qualitative, ethnographic case-study approach was used to explore the representation of women in both lontars, analysing data from interviews, observations, and documentation. The study's results show that the Rangda symbol reflects the destructive power of women who resist oppression. At the same time, Usadha Taru Premana depicts women as harmonious and respected figures. These two symbols depict the contrasting yet complementary roles of women in shaping their identities and positions in Balinese society. This study also reveals that although Balinese women are increasingly recognized across sectors, they still face obstacles to achieving full equality, especially in social and cultural contexts. Therefore, it is important to continue strengthening women's position and promoting gender equality in Bali.

**Keywords:** Balinese Women, Rangda Symbol, Usadha Taru Premana, Lontar, Gender, Patriarchy, Balinese culture.

### INTRODUCTION

Symbolism in Balinese culture has a deep meaning, reflecting the social, cultural, and spiritual structure of its people. One significant symbol in Balinese tradition is Rangda, often depicted as a frightening female figure in Balinese mythology, symbolizing evil forces and the need to confront them. The representation of Rangda, closely related to the role of women in Balinese tradition, is not only found in art and rituals but also in lontar texts that carry specific meanings and functions for Balinese society. Balinese women are often faced with dualistic representations, on the one hand respected in the spiritual and social spheres, but on the other hand, potentially marginalized by the dominant patriarchal ideology in society (Ariyani et al., 2023).

Lontar Calonarang and Usadha Taru Premana are two important texts in Balinese culture that are often used to understand concepts and symbolism in Balinese society's social and spiritual life. Lontar Calonarang tells the story of the battle between Rangda and Barong, in which Rangda symbolises evil, and Barong symbolises goodness. Meanwhile, Usadha Taru Premana emphasizes healing through medicinal plants, which play a significant role in

Balinese society's spiritual life. Although these two texts serve different functions, they are interrelated in their descriptions of the relationships among women, mystical powers, and health.

The representation of women through the symbol of Rangda in the Siwa Tatwa lontar and Usadha Taru Premana is interpreted as the embodiment of the goddess Durga, a strong feminine power often misunderstood. This phenomenon is interesting to explore further, considering that Rangda is often associated with the character Calonarang, a widow from Girah who is portrayed as a witch in the Calonarang lontar text, which in Balinese Hindu beliefs is also seen as a manifestation of Hyang Bhatari Durga, the terrifying ruler of the graveyard (Wirawan, 2019). Understanding the figure of Rangda is crucial for understanding the construction of gender and cultural identity in Bali, especially how feminine power is represented along a complex spectrum, from protective goddesses to feared entities (Nadeau, 2020). The ambivalent portrayal of women, from respected figures to antagonistic characters, reflects the complexity of Balinese society's view of women in spiritual and social contexts (Yuliadi, 2023).

In a spiritual context, Balinese women play a central role in Hindu Dharma religious practices, with rituals and ceremonies that require their active participation as guardians of tradition and performers of yadnya (Titisari et al., 2024). Their involvement is not limited to the domestic sphere. However, it extends to the public sphere through offerings, ceremony preparations, and participation in various religious rituals central to the spiritual life of Balinese society (Agung, 2021). Balinese women often consider work as part of yadnya, a sincere offering to God, which motivates them to remain enthusiastic in seeking livelihoods despite facing injustice in tourism management (Prasiasa et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the role of Balinese Hindu women in public leadership and political participation has increased significantly, driven by demands for gender equality and 30% representation of women in the legislature (Indiani et al., 2022). However, despite progress in political representation, Balinese women still face challenges balancing their traditional roles with modern aspirations (Adityawira & Supriyadi, 2017). This has led to tensions between cultural preservation and economic considerations, exacerbating conflicts over their productive, reproductive, and customary obligations (Titisari et al., 2022). Varied interpretations of religious texts further complicate the position of women, where conservative views often place women in the domestic sphere and consider men superior.

In contrast, moderate and progressive views seek to create a more adaptive gender equality. However, these views often clash with social realities that demand women's active roles in various spheres of life, as well as with broader theological meanings that view women as representations of the Goddess of Wealth, who brings good luck and joy (Mendala, 2022). In fact, although Hindu teachings place women in a noble position, the implementation of customary law and traditions in Bali still often shows gender inequality, especially in marriage, inheritance distribution, and social participation, where male dominance is still very pronounced (Sudiana et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, Balinese women continue to play a crucial role as religious practitioners in various Panca Yadnya ceremonies, affirming their essential contribution to the continuity of spiritual traditions (Mendala, 2022). This role is not merely an obligation but also a reflection of the high work ethic of Balinese women, who view work as a form of devotion (yadnya) to improve themselves and meet the needs of their families (Prasiasa et al., 2023). Their ability to simultaneously manage the household, participate in religious ceremonies, and contribute to the family economy demonstrates the complexity of their multifaceted identities (Mendala, 2022). This transformation of roles has encouraged Balinese women to proactively assume strategic positions in the workforce and government, a strong indicator of their desire to pursue careers in various fields and realize personal aspirations (Padmawati & Putra, 2023). This is in line with the increase in female labour force participation in Bali, which reached 70.56 per cent, the highest in Indonesia, demonstrating their strong commitment to family economic independence and contribution to regional development (Sudiana et al., 2021). This figure not only reflects economic participation but also signifies a significant shift in social dynamics and gender roles within Balinese society, which is adaptive to global changes while remaining steadfast in its spiritual and local cultural values (Putri et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, there are still significant challenges related to the uneven distribution of religious knowledge and self-actualization skills among Balinese Hindu women, particularly in understanding the tattwa aspects of the ceremonial tools they make. This gap hinders their independence and creates a dependence on ready-made ceremonial products, which, although practical, reduce the spiritual depth and autonomy of women in the performance of religious rituals. Therefore, systematic efforts are needed to improve religious literacy and provide relevant training so that Balinese women can more deeply understand the philosophy behind each ritual and ceremonial tool. This increased understanding will empower Balinese women not only to be ritual performers but also to be active guardians and interpreters of religious teachings, thereby strengthening their role as spiritual pillars of society. This empowerment is important given the rapid pace of development and the lack of knowledge among some millennial mothers about ceremonial tools, both bebantenan and matters related to religious ceremonies (Widiantana et al., 2022).

In a social context, Balinese women are traditionally expected not only to manage household affairs but also to contribute to the family economy to meet their daily needs (Adityawira & Supriyadi, 2017). Additionally, they are mandated to actively participate in traditional and social community tasks, which are characteristic of Balinese women's lives and inseparable from Hindu cultural values (Pradnyadari & Herdiyanto, 2018). This situation requires Balinese women to work hard and demonstrate resilience to have their existence recognized and valued by their families and social environment (Prasiasa et al., 2023). Although men should ideally value and respect women as gifts and equal partners, in practice, there is often tension between this ideal and the prevailing cultural reality (Susanta, 2019). Nevertheless, Balinese women remain steadfast in fulfilling their domestic and social responsibilities, often carefully managing their time to balance these roles (Indiani et al., 2022). In fact, many Balinese women now take on dual or multiple roles, not only as mothers and wives, but also as members of the village community and workers in the public sphere, ranging from farmers to professionals in various sectors. This highlights the strong work ethic of Balinese women, inseparable from the prevailing patrilineal kinship system, in which married women must live in their husband's family and continue to carry out various responsibilities (Prasiasa et al., 2023). This patrilineal system, while legally recognizing women under customary law, often creates conditions in which Balinese women are expected to fulfil dual roles as wives and mothers, and to be responsible for the family lineage (Susanta, 2019). This is not a new phenomenon in Bali, as Balinese women have long supported the family economy while still fulfilling their obligations as wives and mothers (Prasiasa et al., 2023). This demand is exacerbated by the purusa kinship system, in which men hold full rights over children and have more dominant legal kinship relationships, thereby burdening women with double responsibilities without full ownership (Pratiwi et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, Balinese women's ability to perform and balance three leading roles—family, economy, and religious customs—demonstrates their extraordinary resilience and adaptability (Ariyanti & Ardhana, 2020). Their motivation stems not only from a desire for financial independence but also from a sense of responsibility toward their families. However, some also work to advance their careers or fill their free time (Wijana et al., 2024). However, the complexity of this role often creates a "double burden" for Balinese women, who must balance productive, reproductive, and traditional demands (Titisari et al., 2022). This phenomenon is exacerbated by government policies that promote gender equality in the workplace, even though, culturally, Balinese women are still burdened with complex domestic and traditional responsibilities (Pratiwi et al., 2018).

Various studies have examined the representation of Balinese women from different perspectives. However, none have comprehensively analyzed the symbol of Rangda through the dual lens of the Calonarang lontar and Usadha Taru Premana using an ethnographic approach. For example, a study of kebaya clothing as a representation of contemporary women in Denpasar highlights aspects of materiality. However, it does not touch on the spiritual and mythological dimensions of Rangda (Suasmini, 2017). Meanwhile, several other studies focus more on the philosophical and ritual aspects of Barong-Rangda as sacred entities that evoke taksu, without specifically exploring how the figure of Rangda, as a manifestation of the wrathful goddess Durga, directly influences the construction of Balinese women's identity in the context of these lontar manuscripts (Wirawan, 2019). Previous research on Balinese feminism also tends to focus on the role of women in the caste and customary systems, which, although relevant, has not fully explored the representation of transcendent feminine power embodied in the figure of Rangda as the goddess Durga (Sukerti et al., 2017). Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap by investigating in depth how Rangda, not merely a symbol of a witch widow, is internalized as a complex manifestation of the goddess Durga in the context of lontar and social practices in Bali (Yuliadi, 2023). The focus on Rangda's duality as a figure both feared and respected, as the embodiment of Calonarang and Hyang Bhatari Uma, or Goddess Durga, highlights the complexity of feminine representation in the mystical and theophilosophical context of Bali (Wirawan, 2019).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### The Concept of Lontar Calonarang

The Calonarang Lontar is a classic Balinese literary text rich in mythological narratives and is often studied to understand representations of power and gender in traditional Balinese society (Ariyani et al., 2023). The primary focus of the study is usually on the character of Rangda, a symbol of ambiguous female power that can be understood as a form of rebellion against the patriarchal structure or as a threat to be defeated. Furthermore, the story of Calonarang is often seen as a conflict between female magical powers and male religious authority, reflecting the tension between ideal gender roles and social reality (Ariyani et al., 2023). This textual analysis also reveals the adaptation and representation of narcissistic desires in the visualization of Calonarang in Bali, showing how the figures of Rangda and Barong have become icons in performing arts and crafts (Yuliadi, 2023).

The figure of Rangda in this lontar is often associated with the widow Dirah or Datengdirah, a widow from Girah, who, in Balinese Hindu beliefs, is considered the embodiment of Hyang Bhatari Durga and the terrifying ruler of the graveyard (Wirawan, 2019; Yuliadi, 2023). The representation of Rangda as a frightening and powerful figure reflects the complexity of women's roles in Balinese mythology, where female power can be interpreted as a threat or as a manifestation of a protective goddess (Weiss, 2017; Wirawan, 2019). In Balinese society, Rangda is perceived as a maternal figure who protects while also representing the Mother Goddess and the ruler of death. Other interpreters symbolize contradictory narcissistic desires between loving oneself and loving others (Yuliai, 2023). In the context of the Calonarang drama performance, Rangda is often portrayed as an antagonist who uses black magic to destroy society. However, in her religious role, she serves as a sacred instrument. Nevertheless, Rangda's role as a representation of Hyang Bhatari Uma, or Dewi Durga, reveals a divine and protective dimension inseparable from Hindu religious practices in Bali (Wirawan, 2019). The character Calon Arang, who is also an integral part of this narrative, is depicted as deeply angry over the rejection of a marriage proposal for her daughter, which she then expresses through witchcraft and the spread of disease (Yuliadi, 2023).

The figure of Rangda, in particular, is often associated with the goddess Durga, who is revered in Bali as a fearsome goddess of death and protector of villages from all forms of evil (Luneva, 2022; Yuliadi, 2023). Rangda's connection to Durga underscores her central position in Balinese cosmology, which goes beyond mere antagonism and positions her as an entity with power over life and death (Luneva, 2022). The goddess Durga, or Hyang Nini Bhatari, is generally perceived by Balinese society as a frightening figure; however, for Tantric spiritual practitioners, she is a figure to be worshipped for her mystical divine powers (Duija et al., 2022). This figure is also considered to have an important positive aspect in maintaining cosmic balance, reflecting the inseparable duality of creation and destruction in the Balinese worldview (Luneva, 2022). Similarly, Barong, as a symbol of goodness, is depicted as facing Rangda, creating a narrative of an eternal battle between good and evil that is never definitively won by one side, reflecting the concept of 'Rwabhineda' in Balinese Hindu philosophy (Lipset & Roscoe, 2011). This concept emphasizes that good and evil are integral parts of life, complementing and inseparably intertwined, so that figures such as Calon Arang and Rangda have a legitimate place in Balinese cultural narratives (Yuliadi, 2023).

The Lontar Calonarang, as one of Bali's classical literary heritages, reflects the complexity of female representation within Balinese society's belief system and culture, often placing women in dual roles as agents of spiritual power and objects of social control. This lontar also often depicts women in a dilemma, trapped between transcendent powers and social constraints that limit them (Nadeau, 2020; Wirawan, 2019). The embodiment of Rangda as a frightening yet respected entity highlights the duality of women's power in Balinese cosmology, encompassing both protective and destructive aspects (Wirawan, 2019; Nadeau, 2020). As the manifestation of the goddess Durga on earth, Rangda, known as Hyang Bherawi, is depicted with terrifying physical characteristics, including a frightening face, long flowing hair, bulging eyes, and a protruding tongue (Wirawan, 2019). These physical characteristics reinforce the perception of Rangda as a terrifying entity with extraordinary magical powers, in line with her role as the ruler of the graveyard (Luneva, 2022). Despite her terrifying appearance, Rangda is also revered as a symbol of dualistic balance in Balinese Rwa-Bhineda philosophy, which values the coexistence of good and evil as essential to life (Yuliadi, 2023). Thus, the figure of Rangda transcends the simple dichotomy between good and evil, and represents the spectrum of natural and spiritual forces that shape the existential reality of Balinese society (Suta, 2009). This is reinforced by her role as Durga, the powerful manifestation of Lord Shiva, who is described with similar characteristics in the Kidung Sudamala, strengthening her identity as both a goddess of death and a protector (Wirawan, 2019). Rangda's role in the Calonarang tradition, therefore, serves not only as entertainment but also as a profound religious ritual, allowing Balinese society to interact with divine and cosmic forces (Suta, 2009).

### **The Concept of Lontar Usadha Taru Pramana**

Lontar Usadha Taru Premana, a text on traditional Balinese medicine, is deeply connected to the holistic Hindu-Balinese cosmology, in which health and illness are not only viewed as biological phenomena but also as part of spiritual balance and harmonious relationships with the universe (Sumiartha, 2022). This manuscript not only documents the diversity of medicinal plants but also integrates them with ethnosemantic concepts that emphasize the close relationships among humans, plants, and spiritual entities in healing efforts (Arsana, 2019). Therefore, the study of Lontar Usadha Taru Premana provides significant insights into the local knowledge system in the utilization of biodiversity for holistic health. This text explicitly combines the use of plants with specific mantras and rituals practised by balian (healers) to treat illnesses in both the physical (sekala) and non-physical (niskala) dimensions. This approach reflects the Balinese people's holistic view of health, in which the balance between skala (the real world) and niskala (the supernatural world) is fundamental to the healing process (Ariyani et al., 2023). The niskala aspect of medicine in the Lontar Usadha Taru Premana often involves the use of rerajahan and mantras believed to be effective in overcoming virility disorders or diseases caused by black magic. The use of

medicinal plants in this lontar also includes the identification of the parts of the plant used, such as roots, rhizomes, stems, bark, leaves, flowers, fruits, or seeds, as well as how these parts are processed and applied according to the type of disease being treated (Muderawan et al., 2024; Arsana, 2019). In addition, this lontar also details methods of disease diagnosis, including the observation of physical and non-physical symptoms and the interpretation of natural signs considered related to a person's health condition (Cahyaningrum & Ardhana, 2022; Arsana, 2019). Overall, the Lontar Usadha Taru Premana demonstrates the totality of traditional knowledge, skills, and practices derived from local natural resources, combining medical and non-medical aspects, such as prayers and mantras, in efforts to maintain, prevent, and treat physical and mental illnesses (Arsana, 2019; Arsana et al., 2020).

Lontar Usadha Taru Pramana is a work that provides comprehensive records of the identification of various types of plants with medicinal properties, their therapeutic functions, and recipes for treating specific symptoms or diseases (Wiratma & Yuliamastuti, 2023). This manuscript serves as a Balinese ethnopharmacopoeia documenting traditional medicinal plants, complete with descriptions of their characteristics, properties, formulations, methods of use, and applications (Muderawan et al., 2024). Typically, this lontar is presented as a conversation between Mpu Kuturan and 167 types of medicinal plants, each described in detail (Antari et al., 2017). Interestingly, the narrative in Usadha Taru Pramana tells of Prabhu Mpu Kuturan, who lost his ability to heal, then performed tapa brata (ascetic practices) until he finally received a blessing from Bhatari to communicate with trees to ask about the properties of each plant (Beratha et al., 2018). Thus, the Usadha Taru Pramana manuscript not only serves as a guide to healing but also reflects the ecological and spiritual wisdom of Balinese society in utilizing the richness of local flora (Sentosa et al., 2021; Arsana, 2019).

### **The Concept of Women in Balinese Culture**

Historically, Balinese society has adhered to a strong patriarchal ideology, placing men as subjects and women as objects in discourses on sexuality and social constructions of beauty (Ariyani et al., 2023). Women are often reduced to roles that fulfil male satisfaction, which is considered a way to maintain family and social stability through the preservation of marital relationships. This condition is reflected in cultural texts, such as Lontar Usada Rukmini Tatwa, which not only presents recipes for beauty and health but also implicitly reflects practices shaped by patriarchal ideology. The implications of this gender ideology in Balinese customary law continue to manifest in discrimination, despite government efforts to achieve gender equality and justice (Sukerti et al., 2017). Nevertheless, Balinese cultural ideology, grounded in Hinduism and the concepts of purusa-pradana and rwabhineda, continues to sustain a patrilineal system that discriminates against women in marriage, lineage, and inheritance (Sukerti et al., 2017; Tomi et al., 2021). This gender discrimination is also evident in the division of domestic and public roles, where Balinese women often bear a double burden as wives, daughters-in-law, and mothers, with unequal positions compared to their husbands (Dwiyani et al., 2022). This situation is exacerbated by the community's view that gender differences are an unchangeable nature, which in turn triggers various forms of gender inequality, including marginalization, subordination, stereotypes, violence, and double workloads (Nurzaimah & Haryanti, 2021).

A conservative approach to religious texts reinforces the view that men have a superior position. At the same time, women are placed in the domestic sphere, whereas a moderate approach acknowledges differences but emphasizes complementarity between the two genders. However, further research shows that this patriarchal ideology is closely related to views in Hinduism, as reflected in sacred texts such as the Dharmashastra, and continues to be passed down through Balinese literature, including lontar-lontar usadha (Ariyani et al., 2023). This mindset often fosters gender discrimination, where women face injustice in various aspects of life, including their social roles and rights (Dwiyani et al., 2022). Therefore, an in-depth study of the identity and role of Balinese women in ancient lontar manuscripts, such as Calonarang and Usadha Taru Premana, is needed to reveal how these narratives contribute to, or even challenge, existing gender constructs.

### **Statement of Problem**

The representation of women in Balinese culture, through the symbol of Rangda and the practice of Usadha Taru Premana, reflects two sides of conflicting feminine power, which are relevant to understanding the role of women in spiritual, social, and cultural life. Rangda in the Calonarang manuscript is depicted as a strong, destructive figure who fights injustice, while in Usadha Taru Premana, women are more often portrayed as healers who maintain physical and spiritual balance. These two representations illustrate the contradictory views of women in Bali: they are valued for their healing abilities but considered dangerous when they express their power. Although women play an important role, gender inequality still prevents them from achieving equal status with men in social, political, and cultural life, and they face obstacles in breaking through oppressive social barriers. This tension raises important questions about the role of women in Balinese mythology and cultural practices.

1. How do the representations of women in the symbols of Rangda and **Usadha Taru Premana** reflect their roles in contemporary Balinese society?

2. What is the impact of female symbolism in both contexts on the understanding of women's roles in contemporary Balinese spiritual, social, and cultural life?
3. Furthermore, how does this duality in the representation of women (on the one hand as a destructive force in Rangda, and on the other as a healer and nurturer in **Usadha Taru Premana**) influence society's perception of women in everyday life, whether in religious, social, or modern cultural contexts?

Therefore, it is important to investigate further the relationship between female symbolism in Balinese culture and the reality of women's lives in the contemporary era, as well as how current social and cultural changes influence the acceptance of stronger, more independent roles for women.

## METHODS

This study will adopt a qualitative, ethnographic case study design to explore the representation of Rangda in Balinese culture (Sariada, 2017). Data will be collected through observation, interviews, documentation, and literature review, and analyzed using content and thematic analysis to identify patterns and meanings in cultural practices related to Rangda (Adiputra et al., 2024). An ethno-archaeological approach will be used to trace the evolution of the Rangda symbol from lontar texts to contemporary practices, while phenomenology will explore subjective meanings from the perspective of Balinese society (Suardana et al., 2018; Segara, 2020). This study will also integrate a humanistic approach to understand cultural interactions in Balinese art and culture (Putra & Lodra, 2019). A document analysis of the Calonarang and Usadha Taru Premana lontar will be conducted to examine the historical evolution of Rangda's representation (Hiswara et al., 2023). Participant observation and in-depth interviews with traditional leaders, artists, and local communities will be used to understand ritual practices and oral narratives about Rangda (Pranajaya et al., 2024). Data triangulation will be used to validate findings from observation, interviews, and documentation studies (Sutisna, 2017). Qualitative data analysis techniques, such as data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, will be used to identify dominant patterns and themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Sutisna, 2017). A qualitative descriptive approach will be used to describe the representation of Balinese women in the Rangda symbol based on the Calonarang and Usadha Taru Premana lontar (Adiputra et al., 2024; Lestawi & Kusuma, 2023). The research locations are in the Denpasar and Tabanan areas. These two locations were chosen because they have very unique characteristics. Denpasar is the capital of Bali province, where most of the population is urban and has been affected by cultural modernization due to a large number of migrants. Tabanan is a regency with a strong traditional aspect, and the community still practises many rituals. Tabanan is primarily a rural area with strong local beliefs and classical cultures that its people still hold dear.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on interviews with 20 respondents, consisting of Hindu religious leaders and traditional leaders, artists, cultural researchers, and the general public in religious activities, it can be concluded that the representation of women in the Rangda symbol in Bali has a very complex meaning.

### Representation of Women in the Rangda and Usadha Taru Premana Symbols

In Balinese culture, the symbols of Rangda and Usadha Taru Premana play an important role in shaping perceptions of women's position in society. The symbol of Rangda, often found in Lontar Calonarang, depicts women as figures with destructive powers and as symbols of resistance against injustice. In contrast, in Usadha Taru Premana, women are depicted as more positive figures, acting as healers and guardians of the spiritual and physical balance of society. These two symbols reflect a deep duality in the representation of women, highlighting the various roles they play in Bali, both spiritually and socially.

**Table 1.** Representation of Women in the Symbols of Rangda and Usadha Taru Premana

Aspect	Rangda (Lontar Calonarang)	Usadha Taru Premana (Traditional Balinese Medicine)
Role of Women	Women are influential figures with destructive force, yet also symbols of resistance against injustice.	Women as guardians of balance and healers, playing an important role in spirituality and health.
Symbolism	Symbols of destruction and retribution, yet also maintaining the balance of the spiritual world by opposing injustice.	A symbol of healing and restoration, connecting the physical and spiritual worlds to maintain harmony in society.

<b>Feminine Power</b>	Destructive power and resistance against oppression are often depicted as a threatening figure.	A softer, feminine power, yet equally vital for the balance of nature and life.
<b>Social Perspective</b>	Viewed as a female figure who must fight for rights and justice, often associated with the dark and negative aspects.	Women are respected in their roles as healers and protectors of society, showcasing the positive aspects of femininity.
<b>Spiritual Life</b>	Playing a role in maintaining the balance between good and evil forces, but with a power that tends toward destruction.	Women are seen as agents of spiritual harmony, introducing balance and healing into everyday life.
<b>Contribution to Society</b>	Challenging social norms, conveying a message about the power of women to change power structures, but they are often marginalized.	Respected and valued for their role in maintaining the physical and spiritual health of society, they are more accepted in the social order.
<b>Role in Mythology</b>	Depicted in mythology as a potent antagonist, fighting for revenge.	Women in traditional medicine focus more on healing and preserving life, taking on a more positive role.
<b>Dual Meaning</b>	Representing both sides of femininity: destructive power (in resistance) and spiritual power (in the balance of the universe).	Represents healing power and life balance, with a focus on care and maintenance.

Rangda is depicted as a powerful yet destructive figure who rebels against injustice, though she is often considered a threat. In Balinese mythology, Rangda represents the negative side of female power that resists domination and oppression. Meanwhile, Usadha Taru Premana depicts women as healers, connectors between the physical and spiritual worlds, and guardians of the balance of nature, with respect for their role in maintaining harmony in society. This table illustrates significant differences in the representation of women: Rangda, a figure of resistance associated with destructive forces, and women in Usadha Taru Premana, who focus on recovery, harmony, and healing.

#### **The Impact of Female Symbolism in the Context of Rangda and Usadha Taru Premana on the Understanding of Women's Roles in Contemporary Balinese Spiritual, Social, and Cultural Life**

The following table shows the impact of female symbolism in Rangda and Usadha Taru Premana on the understanding of women's roles in contemporary Balinese social, spiritual, and cultural life:

**Table 2.** The impact of female symbolism in Rangda and Usadha Taru Premana on the role of women today

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Rangda Symbol (Lontar Calonarang)</b>	<b>Usadha Taru Premana (Traditional Balinese Medicine)</b>	<b>Impact on Current Life</b>
<b>Women's Role</b>	Women as strong figures with destructive power, symbols of resistance against injustice	Women as guardians of balance and healers play an important role in spirituality and health.	Women are agents of change and empowerment in various sectors, fighting inequality.
<b>Symbolism</b>	A symbol of destruction and retribution, but also of maintaining balance in the spiritual world	Symbols of healing and restoration, connecting the physical and spiritual worlds	Women are recognized in broader roles in maintaining social and spiritual balance.
<b>Feminine Power</b>	Destructive power and resistance against oppression are often depicted as a threatening figure.	The gentler feminine power is vital for the balance of nature and life	Women are valued for their ability to contribute to leadership, society, and culture
<b>Social Perspective</b>	Women are seen as figures who fight against injustice and oppression, but are often viewed negatively.	Women are respected in their roles as healers and preservers of life, and are more accepted in the social order.	Women are now more valued and empowered, but still face barriers in some social spaces.
<b>Spiritual Life</b>	Play a role in maintaining the balance between good and evil forces, especially the more destructive ones.	Women are seen as agents of spiritual harmony, introducing balance and healing.	Women play an important role in maintaining spiritual balance in society and the family.

<b>Contribution to Society</b>	Challenging social norms, conveying a message about the power of women to change power structures	Respected and valued for their role in maintaining the physical and spiritual health of society	Women play an active role in social, political, and cultural change, creating new spaces in society.
<b>Role in Mythology</b>	Depicted as a potent antagonist, fighting for revenge	Women in traditional medicine focus on healing and preserving life	Women in modern life play an important role in creating balance in society

The following is an explanation of the table above:

**1. Role of Women:**

- a) Rangda portrays women as destructive forces, while Usadha Taru Premana depicts women as healers and guardians of social and spiritual balance.
- b) Current Impact: Women are increasingly valued and play roles across social, political, and cultural sectors, while continuing to serve harmonious and healing roles in society.

**2. Symbolism:**

- a) Rangda symbolises destructive power and resistance, while Usadha Taru Premana emphasises healing power and harmony.
- b) Current Impact: Women play an important role in maintaining social and spiritual balance, and their ability to lead and heal society is recognized.

**3. Feminine Power:**

- a) Rangda represents the destructive side of women, while Usadha Taru Premana depicts women as guardians of life's balance.
- b) Current Impact: Women are valued for their role in changing social structures and contributing to positive change in social, cultural, and political life.

**4. Social Perspective:**

- a) Rangda is seen as a rebellious figure, often viewed negatively, while women in Usadha Taru Premana are respected for their roles in healing and balance.
- b) Current Impact: Although women are more valued, they still face obstacles in breaking through patriarchal power and social structures.

**5. Spiritual Life:**

- a) Rangda plays a role in maintaining balance in the spiritual world but tends toward destruction, whereas Usadha Taru Premana depicts women as guardians of spiritual harmony.
- b) Current Impact: Women continue to play an important role in spiritual life, both in the family and in society, emphasizing the balance between the physical and spiritual worlds.

**6. Contribution to Society:**

- a) Rangda challenges social norms and teaches resistance, while Usadha Taru Premana emphasizes women's role in maintaining balance between physical and spiritual health.
- b) Current Impact: Women play an active role in social change, work, education, and public life, although they still face challenges in achieving full equality.

**7. Role in Mythology:**

- a) Rangda is depicted as an evil figure who fights against injustice, while women in Usadha Taru Premana focus on care and healing.
- b) Current Impact: Modern women play an important role in balancing society through social work, medicine, and leadership.

**8. Dual Meaning:**

- a) Rangda represents both sides of femininity: destructive power and spiritual power, while Usadha Taru Premana emphasizes the role of healing and balance.
- b) Current Impact: Women now have the freedom to express themselves in various roles, either as social rebels fighting against inequality or as guardians of harmony in society.

This table shows how the symbolism of women in Rangda and Usadha Taru Premana reflects the role of women in Balinese mythology and its impact on the understanding of women's roles in Balinese spiritual, social, and cultural life today.

**The Impact of Duality in the Representation of Women on Balinese Society's Perception of Daily Life, Whether in a Religious, Social, or Modern Cultural Context**

The following table illustrates the duality in the representation of women in daily life across religious, social, and cultural contexts.

**Table 3.** Representation of women in Balinese society's perception of daily life

Aspect	Rangda (Symbol of Destructive Power)	Usadha Taru Premana (Symbol of Healing and Nurturing)	Impact on the Perceptions of Balinese Society
Role of Women	Women as strong figures, full of destructive power, symbols of resistance against injustice.	Women as healers and guardians of spiritual and physical balance.	Balinese society views women not only in their domestic roles, but also as agents of change and guardians of balance.
Feminine Power	The destructive power in fighting oppression and injustice is often considered threatening.	The softer, feminine power is yet crucial in maintaining the balance of nature and life.	Women are now seen as strong leaders, like Rangda, as well as healers who balance society, as in Usadha Taru Premana.
Role in Religion	Rangda plays a role in maintaining spiritual balance with destructive powers that drive away evil spirits.	Women in Usadha Taru Premana function as a link between the spirit world and humans, maintaining spiritual balance.	Women in religion are considered respected spiritual mediators, both as resistors (Rangda) and as preservers (Usadha Taru Premana).
Social View	Women who play roles like Rangda are often seen as dangerous or threatening because of their power.	Women who play a role in healing or preservation are respected and considered guardians of harmony.	Balinese society values the feminine role in maintaining social and spiritual harmony, but the strong role of women in resistance (Rangda) is still accepted with hesitation.
Modern Cultural Perceptions	Women who challenge social structures are often viewed with scepticism, even though the symbol of Rangda represents the power of rebellion against injustice.	Women who maintain balance between the social and spiritual worlds, as in traditional medicine, are more valued in modern culture.	In modern culture, women are more accepted in leadership and empowerment roles, though their roles as rebels or leaders remain controversial.
Social Life	Rangda shows the side of women that can play a role in social change, but is often seen as a figure that needs to be controlled.	Women in Usadha Taru Premana play a more socially accepted role, as protectors and healers in the community.	This duality shows that Balinese society is increasingly accepting of women's roles in social change, both as leaders and as healers or protectors of welfare.
Spiritual Life	Rangda plays a role in maintaining the balance of the spirit world, but with destructive powers.	Women act as guardians of spiritual balance between the human and spirit worlds in Usadha Taru Premana.	In spiritual life, women are respected for their role in maintaining harmony between the physical and spiritual worlds, both in healing and in fighting injustice.
Acceptance in Society	Women who play roles like Rangda are more often viewed negatively because their roles lead to resistance and violence.	Women in Usadha Taru Premana are more accepted because they focus on healing and maintaining social life.	Women are now more accepted in various roles in society, but there are still challenges in accepting women who are brave and resistant, as seen in the Rangda symbol.

Here is an explanation of the table above:

1. **Women's Roles:**

- Rangda depicts women as rebellious figures who fight against injustice. Usadha Taru Premana depicts women as healers and guardians of balance.
- In modern life, women are seen not only as having roles within the family but also as agents of social change or guardians of balance in society.

**2. Feminine Power:**

- a) Rangda represents destructive power and resistance to injustice, while women in Usadha Taru Premana symbolize a softer feminine power that maintains balance.
- b) In Balinese society, women who play a role in resistance or leadership are now more appreciated, but they still face challenges in being entirely accepted in these roles.

**3. Role in Religion:**

- a) Rangda maintains spiritual balance in ways sometimes considered destructive, while women in Usadha Taru Premana play a role in maintaining the relationship between humans and the spirit world.
- b) In Balinese spiritual life, women are now respected both as healers and as figures who maintain the balance of the universe.

**4. Social Perspectives:**

- a) Rangda, despite being a symbol of resistance, is often seen as a threatening figure because of her destructive role, whereas Usadha Taru Premana is more accepted in social contexts.
- b) Balinese society is increasingly accepting of women's roles in social life, but acceptance of more courageous and rebellious female roles, such as the Rangda symbol, still requires change.

**5. Modern Cultural Perception:**

- a) Rangda, as a rebellious and destructive figure, is more controversial in modern culture, while Usadha Taru Premana depicts women in more socially acceptable positive roles.
- b) Although women are increasingly accepted in various leadership and empowerment roles, there are challenges in accepting more transformative and rebellious female roles, as depicted by Rangda.

**6. Social Life:**

- a) Rangda serves to fight injustice and fight for social change, but is often seen as a figure that needs to be controlled. Usadha Taru Premana depicts a more harmonious and accepted role for women in society.
- b) This duality shows that Balinese society is increasingly accepting of more diverse roles for women, both as courageous leaders and as healers who maintain social welfare.

**7. Spiritual Life:**

- a) Rangda maintains the balance of the spirit world through destructive forces, while women in Usadha Taru Premana maintain harmony in the spiritual world.
- b) In spiritual life, women are increasingly respected for their role in maintaining balance between the physical and spiritual worlds, both through healing and resistance to injustice.

**8. Acceptance in Society:**

- a) Rangda, despite being a symbol of resistance, is often considered a threat or inappropriate in more conservative social structures. In contrast, women in Usadha Taru Premana are more respected because they maintain social harmony.
- b) Women in Bali are now more accepted in various roles in society, though their more daring roles, such as the Rangda symbol, remain constrained by traditional social norms.

## CONCLUSION

This study examines the representation of women in Balinese culture through the symbols of Rangda and Usadha Taru Premana, which reflect the duality of women's roles. The symbol of Rangda depicts women as rebels who fight against injustice, while Usadha Taru Premana shows women as healers who maintain physical and spiritual balance. These two symbols reflect the complexity of Balinese women's identities, which are respected but also viewed with ambivalence.

The symbol of Rangda conveys the destructive power of women in resisting oppression, while Usadha Taru Premana embodies a softer feminine role in maintaining balance in life. This duality illustrates the tension between traditional roles that limit women and more active modern roles.

This symbolism shows that although the role of women in Bali is increasingly recognized, they still face obstacles to equality, especially in social and cultural aspects. Therefore, it is important to continue strengthening women's position and promoting gender equality in Bali.

### Respondents

**A. General Public**

- I Wayan Mei Arta, Male, Age 27, Denpasar

- I Wayan Nik Selamat, Male, 47 years old, Denpasar
- Putu Sri Wahyuni Emawatiningsih, Female, Age 45, Denpasar
- Dhea Christira Devi, Female, 23 years old, Tabanan
- Luh Putu Suksma Dewi, Female, Age 44, Tabanan

**B. Traditional Leaders and Hindu Religious Leaders**

- Kadek Hendra Suwarcana, Male, Age 42, Denpasar
- I Gede Wijaya Saputra, Male, Age 44, Denpasar
- I Wayan Cika, Male, Age 59, Denpasar
- I Wayan Juliarta, Male, Age 47, Tabanan
- I Wayan Eka Wiyana, Male, Age 62, Tabanan

**C. Artist**

- Putu Sidik Karya, Male, Age 31, Denpasar
- Pande Gede Mahaindra, Male, Age 39, Denpasar
- I Nyoman Ardika, Male, Age 43, Tabanan
- Ni Nyoman Widyasari, Female, Age 40, Tabanan
- I Wayan Cita Sentana, Male, Age 32, Denpasar

**D. Bali Cultural Researcher**

- I Wayan Parwata, Male, Age 36, Denpasar
- Sang Ketut Pesan Sandiyasa, Male, Age 64, Denpasar
- Dayu Komang Sandrika, Female, Age 64, Denpasar
- Dr. I Made Arka, Male, Age 52, Denpasar
- Sang Nyoman Gede Adhi Santika, Male, Age 30, Denpasar

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