

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Indonesian ancestors before religions came, already knew the Almighty. God created humans having weaknesses and firmness. That weakness is believed by the Javanese people as those that must be cleared by a ritual called *Ruwat*. According to Akhwan & Roy, (2010) *Ruwat* has long-lived and is found in ancient Javanese literary works, for example in the *Ramayana* book written in ancient *Mataram*, around the tenth century. The word *Ruwat* means "free". *Ruwat* or *Ngaruwati* comes from the Javanese language which means guarding against the incident caused by *Dewa Batara*. Thus, doing a *ruwat* ritual can also be interpreted as freeing someone from the evilness of the angry Gods.

Ruwat aims to protect children or *Sukerta* from the dangers of the supernatural, which is symbolized by *Bathara Kala* or God of destruction. The word *Sukerta* is believed to be a weakness of people who can cause havoc. Therefore, people who are included in *Sukerta* or want to eliminate bad luck must be cleansed by *Ruwat*. By doing the ritual, a person can survive if his/her life is to be blessed with *slametan*, *sesaji*, and performing a show called *Murwa Kala*. This *Murwa Kala* performance according to Mariani (2017. p. 45) makes people reject bad luck and unhappiness that will happen to children. Javanese people believe that if a person has done the ritual, then the person is free from his/her sin, bad luck, and other negative things.

According to Ekawati (2015), there are various types of *Sukerta* criteria from various sources, such as Endraswara, where there are 45 types of *sukerta*. In *Serat Centhini* mention there are 19 types of *Sukerta*, Whereas, in *Serat Manikmaya* there are 60 types, and *Serat Murwakala* mentions there are 147 types, whereas according to *Serat Pustaka Raja Purwa* there are 136 types (Ekawati, 2015). Soetarno (1995) mentioned in his book that there are 60 types of people who belong to the category "*sukerta*" and must be *ruwat* based on the literature of "*Pakem Pangruwatan Murwakala*".

The people who participated in the *Ruwatan* ritual are usually grouped into *Ontang-anting* (1 son), *Onting-anting* (1 daughter), *Uger-uger* (2 sons), *Kembang sepasang* (2 daughters), *Gedhana-gedhini* (2 children consist of 1 son and 1 daughter), *Kembar* (two children are born together in one day both son or daughter), *Dhampit* (twins but male and female), *Pandawa* (5 sons), *Sarimpi* (4 daughters) and many more. The Javanese people hold a ritual called *Ruwatan Sukerta* in those kinds of people categories. It is a traditional ceremony held to avoid misfortune (Achroni, 2008, p. 10). These people are believed by the Javanese to have bad luck since birth and must be cleaned by *Ruwat*.

Mulder mentioned in his book that Java was the political center of the Indonesian archipelago and the largest ethnic group (1983, p. 1). One of the cities in Central Java, Yogyakarta, is a city of historical relics of the kingdom of *Mataram* and the major center of Java. In the past, Javanese people were closely related to *kebatinan*, namely the assumption benefits of mysticism. When humans submit to God and faithfully practice mysticism, they are believed to create a just and

prosperous society, showing a harmonious relationship. According to Suseno (1984, p. 15) Javanese religion is determined by a belief in an unseen spirit that results in misfortune, and to protect against such bad luck, people can protect themselves by giving offerings (food, flowers, and incense) or still maintaining spiritual rituals.

Before the religions come to Indonesia, Javanese people believed that God is manifested in various ritual expressions. Whereas to strengthen it, religious behaviour is needed. Although outwardly they worship the spirit, Javanese religion based on mystical attitudes and behaviour, in their beliefs remain centralized in the Believer of One Mighty God. The high religiosity of the Javanese people, form beliefs with the terms animism and dynamism (Marzuki, 2012). Javanese ritual implementation based on this belief was carried out simply like for example by thanking God under a big tree, in a cave, and on the beach, and asking parents to pray for their child. The prayers are perfected for the *Ruwatan Sukerta* ritual.

Ruwatan is an ancient ritual of self-cleaning that has been known by the Javanese community long before the inclusion of religions in Indonesia. It is one of the rituals by the Javanese people that is made sacred and spirit.

Ruwatan is a ceremony performed for the release of *Sukerta* from negative things or bad luck. It is carried out by Javanese people. Whether it is in West Java, Central Java, or East Java. Based on the writer's initial interview with the head of *Ruwatan Sukerta* in a D.I.Yogyakarta event, Mr. Ponco said that the purpose and meaning of *Ruwatan* rituals in various regions were the same, but the arrangement of the programs was different. With perfected *Ruwatan* ritual, there were several

different moments of rituals held in various regions. Several *Ruwatan Sukerta* ceremonies can be visited or opened to the public. However, in this study, *Ruwatan Sukerta* Yogyakarta is not open to the public. In the implementation of the Yogyakarta *Ruwatan Sukerta*, the people who attended the ritual from both *Sukerta* and parents are wearing traditional costumes.

For my research, I will explore the implementation of what elements are used in the *Ruwatan Sukerta* ritual held by *Direktorat Kepercayaan Terhadap Tuhan YME dan Tradisi* (Sunday, September 23th 2018). I am interested in observing the meaning and the reason for participation in the *Ruwatan Sukerta* ceremony.

Other researchers who have done the study on *Ruwatan* are Akhwan & Roy, (2010). Their research is entitled *Pendidikan Moral Masyarakat Jawa (Studi Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Moral dalam Tradisi Ruwatan)*. They focus on the study of moral education value. Ekawati, (2015) research is entitled *Aktualisasi Ruwatan pada Masyarakat Jawa*. It talks about the philosophical studies on *Ruwatan*, also Kleden-Probonegoro's, (2008) research entitled *Ritus Ruwat: Esensialisme Baru Dalam Politik Kebudayaan Indonesia*, which talked about the action performed by participants of the ritual and the impact who still believe in mysticism. My study will not talk about the whole elements involved, but focuses on *Ruwatan* ritual implementation elements of especially the participants.

In this study, I focus on High context ritual. High context ritual in Indonesia especially for THE Javanese community, that aims to eliminate bad luck, or *Sukerta* is called *Ruwatan*. Mr. Drs. Kanjeng Raden Tumanggung Prawiso Renoto, head of Yogyakarta Palace Art Department, whom the writer interviewed at *Ruwatan*

Sukerta Yogyakarta for this initial research, said that before 700 AD the Indonesian knew God or was called the Yang Maha Kuasa. God created humans with blessing, not only strength, but humans have weakness, and the weakness must be eliminated by way of Ruwat. In earlier times, the Ruwatan method only begged parents to pray, but as time progressed and there have been many religions in Indonesia, the Ruwatan method has been updated as an element to the prayers. Yet, although I have done initial interviews for my research, I need to conduct more to dig up the real meaning of *Ruwatan*, and the elements it carries. This is why I make this research for my Thesis.

1.2 Field of the Study

This research is related to the field of folklore, focusing on ritual.

1.3 Scope of the Study

This research will focus on the ritual of *Ruwatan Sukerta's* by the Javanese people. I focus my study on the implementation elements of *Ruwatan Sukerta* D.I Yogyakarta ritual ceremony, and the results of my interview with the people who participate in the ritual ceremony and key informants who know about the procession and how to hold the ritual.

1.4 Research Question

1. What are the elements involved in the *Ruwatan Sukerta* ritual of D.I. Yogyakarta?
2. What are the actions/processions performed in a *Ruwatan Sukerta* ritual?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is:

1. To find out the elements involved in the *Ruwatan Sukerta* ritual of D.I. Yogyakarta.
2. To understand the actions performed in the *Ruwatan Sukerta* ritual.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant to do because I can apply the theories of Ceremony Elements learnt in the Introduction to Folklore course. The result of my research can add to the publications of the Javanese *Ruwatan* ceremony. Also, to give knowledge of the belief in mystics and traditions that are believed. It helps the readers' especially Javanese people to create and confirm a sense of their identity about *Ruwatan* ritual.

1.7 Definition of Terms

1.7.1 Implementation

According to Merriam Webster, implementation is an act or instance of implementing something: the process of making something active or effective (Stamper, 1847). Jane Erick-Lane mentioned in his journal that the act of implementing or the state of being implemented, and presents the following keywords for "implement": the process of implementation refers to the bringing about of outcomes that are congruent with the original intention(s) by means of outputs (Lane & Lane, 1983, p.17).

1.7.2 Folklore

According to the *Cambridge Dictionary*, *Folklore* means the traditional stories, beliefs, and customs of a group of people (Mcintosh, 1999). As cited by Dundes in Bronner (2007, p.viii) folklore is people's "symbolic autobiography," because folklore gives an "inside out" view of society. Folklore, is affirmed in keywords of essay titles, was a mirror of culture, a lens for society, a key to behavior, a projection of mind". "Folklore is as old as humanity," folklore is a product of the mind that responds to and constructs culture. Sims & Stephens (2005, p. 2) said that folklore is present in many kinds of informal communication, whether verbal (oral and written texts), customary (behaviors, rituals) or material (physical objects). So folklore is part of a culture that is traditionally spread and passed on both verbally and nonverbally.

1.7.3 Folk Belief

Green mentioned in his book that folk-belief is a broad genre of folklore that is often expressed in narratives, customs, rituals, foodways, proverbs, and rhymes (1997, p. 89). In psychology research and reference, belief is generally defined as convictions that things held in the mind are true. (Anderson, Lepper, & Ross, 1980)

1.7.4 *Ruwatan*

According to Soetarno (1995, p.15) “*Ruwatan merupakan seni pertunjukan yang berasal dari kebudayaan pra-Hindu, merupakan upacara penyembahan roh nenek moyang atau upacara inisiasi yang digunakan orang Jawa sebagai pembebas manusia dari kekuatan supranatural buruk yang mengancam manusia yang sial keberadaannya di bumi*”. This means that *Ruwatan* is an art performance from a pre-Hindu culture that worshipping ancestral spirits or an initiation ceremony used by the Javanese as a human liberator from bad supernatural who threaten unlucky humans exist on earth.

1.7.5 *Sukerta*

Sukerta is the type of person who will perform the *Ruwatan* ritual. There are various types of *Sukerta* which according to Javanese belief must be in *Ruwat*. According to Pamungkas, (2008, p.29-31), there are 33 types of *Sukerta*.