

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains about background of the study, statement of problem, research problem, objectives of the study, research significances, previous studies, conceptual framework, and definition of key terms.

1. 1 Background of the Study

Folklore plays an essential role in preserving the cultural heritage of a society. It contains stories, beliefs, and values that are transmitted orally from one generation to another. As a form of traditional narrative, folklore reflects how people understand life, morality, social relationships, and their connection with nature and the supernatural. Through folklore, a community maintains its identity and passes on lessons that guide behavior and shape collective values.

Folklore consists of various forms, such as myths, legends, and folktales. Among these, folktales are the most widely known and easily accessible. Folktales are usually fictional narratives that include magical elements, supernatural beings, and extraordinary events. Despite their imaginative nature, folktales are deeply rooted in the social and cultural context of the society in which they originate. They function not only as entertainment but also as a medium for moral education, especially in traditional communities where oral storytelling is common.

One recurring motif found in folktales across different cultures is shapeshifting, which refers to the transformation of a character from one physical form to another. This transformation often involves a change from human to animal or vice versa. In many folktales, shapeshifting occurs as a result of a curse, divine

punishment, or magical force. However, the meaning of shapeshifting goes beyond physical change. It often symbolizes an inner transformation related to moral growth, self-awareness, and the process of overcoming personal flaws.

According to James Danandjaja (2007), Shapeshifting in folktales is commonly used to test a character's character and values. A transformed character usually experiences hardship, humiliation, or suffering before being restored to their original form. This process highlights the idea that true worth is measured by inner qualities rather than outward appearance. As a result, shapeshifting becomes a narrative device through which cultural values are expressed and reinforced.

In the Indonesian context, *Lutung Kasarung* is a well-known Sundanese folktale that strongly features the motif of shapeshifting. The story centers on Guruminda, a heavenly prince who is transformed into a black monkey as a form of punishment. His transformation forces him to live humbly and patiently among humans. Through this experience, Guruminda undergoes moral and spiritual development before eventually returning to his human form. The story reflects Sundanese cultural values such as humility, obedience to divine power, sincerity, and the belief that inner virtue is more important than external appearance.

From a different cultural background, British folktales also contain narratives involving shapeshifting and moral testing. One such example is *The Black Bull of Norway*, a traditional British folktale recorded by Flora Annie Steel. In this story, a prince is transformed into a black bull and must endure a long journey filled with trials and challenges. The shapeshifting experienced by the prince represents endurance, loyalty, perseverance, and responsibility. The narrative

emphasizes the importance of faithfulness and commitment in overcoming obstacles and achieving personal fulfillment.

The choice of *Lutung Kasarung* and *The Black Bull of Norway* is based on their shared thematic focus on shapeshifting as a central narrative element. Although the two folktales originate from different cultural and geographical contexts, both portray shapeshifting as a meaningful process that leads to personal growth and moral understanding. By comparing these two stories, it becomes possible to examine how similar narrative motifs are used to convey different cultural values and worldviews.

This study adopts a comparative literature approach to analyze the representation of shapeshifting and cultural values in both folktales. Comparative literature allows scholars to explore connections and differences between literary works from different cultures without limiting analysis to national or linguistic boundaries. Through this approach, the study seeks to reveal how universal themes, such as transformation and morality, are shaped by specific cultural contexts.

Therefore, this research focuses on the analysis of shapeshifting and cultural values in *Lutung Kasarung* and *The Black Bull of Norway*. The study aims to demonstrate that folktales function not only as traditional narratives but also as cultural texts that reflect social norms, moral principles, and collective beliefs. By examining these two stories, this research is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of how different societies use folklore to express shared human values in culturally specific ways.

1.2 Statements of Problem

The folktales *Lutung Kasarung* from Sundanese culture and *The Black Bull of Norway* from British folklore both present the motif of shapeshifting, in which a prince is transformed into an animal form as a result of a curse or supernatural power. In both stories, shapeshifting functions as a crucial narrative element that shapes the characters' journeys and determines the development of the plot. Although the two folktales originate from different cultural traditions, they share similarities in portraying transformation as a meaningful process rather than a mere physical change.

Despite these similarities, the two stories reflect different cultural values and worldviews. *Lutung Kasarung* emphasizes values rooted in Sundanese culture, such as humility, patience, spiritual obedience, and harmony with divine power. These values are reflected through the transformation and moral development of Guruminda as well as the virtuous character of Purbasari. In contrast, *The Black Bull of Norway* highlights values commonly found in British folklore, including loyalty, perseverance, endurance, and commitment. The long journey and trials experienced by the transformed prince illustrate the importance of faithfulness and sacrifice in achieving happiness.

Although shapeshifting plays a central role in both narratives, the way this motif is constructed and interpreted is shaped by each culture's beliefs and moral perspectives. This raises questions about how shapeshifting functions symbolically in each story and how cultural values are embedded within the transformation process. Furthermore, the comparison of these two folktales provides an

opportunity to explore how similar narrative motifs can convey different meanings across cultures.

Therefore, this research focuses on comparing *Lutung Kasarung* and *The Black Bull of Norway* to analyze the representation of shapeshifting and cultural values in each story. By applying a comparative literature approach, this study seeks to examine how shapeshifting serves as a test of character, how cultural contexts influence the values portrayed, and how these values reflect the moral ideals of Sundanese and British societies.

This study aims to analyze the folktales *Lutung Kasarung* and *The Black Bull of Norway* by focusing on the motif of shapeshifting and the cultural values embedded in each story. Using a comparative literature approach, this research seeks to examine how shapeshifting functions as a central narrative element and how it reflects the moral and cultural perspectives of Sundanese and British societies. Through this analysis, the study intends to reveal both similarities and differences in the representation of shapeshifting and cultural values across the two folktales. These questions are as follows:

1. What cultural values are reflected through the process of shapeshifting in *Lutung Kasarung* and *The Black Bull of Norway*?
2. How do cultural contexts influence the similarities and differences in the representation of shapeshifting and cultural values in both folktales?

1.3 Research Purposes

This study aims to examine the folktales *Lutung Kasarung* and *The Black Bull of Norway* by focusing on the motif of shapeshifting and the cultural values represented in each story. Using a comparative literature approach, the objectives of this study are as follows:

To identify the cultural values reflected through the process of shapeshifting in *Lutung Kasarung* and *The Black Bull of Norway*.

To analyze how cultural contexts influence the similarities and differences in the representation of shapeshifting and cultural values in both folktales.

1.4 Research Significances

In line with the research question, the main purposes of this study are:

1.4.1 Benefits Theoretically

This research contributes to the field of comparative literature by examining folktales from different cultural backgrounds through the motif of shapeshifting. By comparing *Lutung Kasarung* from Sundanese folklore and *The Black Bull of Norway* from British folklore, this study provides insight into how similar narrative motifs are shaped by distinct cultural contexts.

Furthermore, this study supports theoretical discussions in folklore and cultural studies by demonstrating that shapeshifting functions not only as a narrative device, but also as a symbolic representation of moral values, cultural beliefs, and social ideals. The analysis shows that physical transformation in folktales often reflects inner moral change and cultural expectations within a society.

This research also contributes to the understanding of folktales as cultural texts that convey meaning beyond entertainment. By highlighting the relationship between shapeshifting and cultural values, this study reinforces the idea that traditional narratives play an important role in preserving and transmitting cultural ideology. Therefore, this research may serve as a theoretical reference for future studies in folklore, motif analysis, and comparative literary studies.

1.4.2 Benefits in practically

This research provides academic benefits for students and general readers by encouraging a deeper and more critical understanding of folktales through a comparative literary approach. The analysis of *Lutung Kasarung* and *The Black Bull of Norway* helps readers recognize how shapeshifting and cultural values are embedded within narrative structures, leading to more systematic literary interpretation.

This study is also beneficial for lecturers and educators in the field of literature, particularly in teaching folklore and comparative literature. The findings of this research can be used as supporting academic material to introduce cross-cultural analysis and to enhance students' appreciation of both local and foreign folktales.

In addition, this research offers practical value for future author who are interested in studying folktales or traditional narratives. The comparative framework and analytical procedures applied in this study may serve as a reference for further research focusing on shapeshifting, cultural values, and cross-cultural perspectives in literary studies.

1.5 Previous Studies

The writer review previous studies to understand similar topics, objects, and theoretical approaches that have been applied in earlier research. By examining previous research, the writer is able to identify relevant theories, methods, and research gaps that support the present study.

One previous study related to comparative folklore is a thesis entitled *Perbandingan Perwatakan dan Nilai-Nilai Moral dalam Dongeng Frau Holle dan Bawang Merah Bawang Putih: Kajian Sastra Bandingan* by Noviana Laily N. (2015), a student of Yogyakarta State University. This research compares a German folktale, Frau Holle from the Grimm Brothers' collection, and an Indonesian folktale, *Bawang Merah Bawang Putih*. The study focuses on the similarities and differences in characterization and moral values reflected in both stories. Using a comparative literature approach, the research highlights how cultural background influences moral lessons and character development in traditional folktales. This study is relevant to the present research because it demonstrates the application of comparative literature in analyzing folktales from different cultures.

Another relevant study is a master's thesis entitled *Carita Pantun Sunda Lutung Kasarung (Ulikan Struktur, Motif, Sémiotik, jeung Intertéktual)* by Nesa Wara Puspita (2022). This research examines *Lutung Kasarung* through structural, motif, semiotic, and intertextual analysis. The study identifies various narrative motifs, including transformation, and explains how these motifs function within the structure of the Sundanese pantun tradition. This research provides an important

theoretical foundation for understanding the motif of transformation in *Lutung Kasarung*, which supports the analysis conducted in the present study.

In addition, a relevant undergraduate thesis from UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung is entitled *The Myths between “Dewi Sri” by Ki Umbara and “Ostara” by Edain McCoy* by Siti Hotimah Afriani (2024), from the English Literature Department. This study applies a comparative literary approach to analyze two myths from different cultural backgrounds, namely Indonesian mythology and European mythology. The research focuses on mythological structures, symbolic meanings, and cultural values represented in both texts. The findings show that although the myths originate from different cultures, they share similar symbolic functions related to fertility, prosperity, and human relationships with nature, while also reflecting distinct cultural beliefs and worldviews. This study is relevant to the present research because it demonstrates how comparative literature can be used to examine cultural values and symbolic elements across different mythological traditions, which is in line with the comparative analysis of folktales conducted in this study.

1.6 Conceptual Framework

This research examines the motif of shapeshifting and the representation of cultural values in two folktales from different cultural backgrounds, namely the Sundanese folktale *Lutung Kasarung* and the British folktale *The Black Bull of Norway*. Both stories present shapeshifting as a central narrative element in which a prince is transformed into an animal form due to supernatural forces. This shared motif serves as the main conceptual foundation for the comparative analysis.

The study is grounded in the perspective of comparative literature, as proposed by Susan Bassnett (1993) and Sapardi Djoko Damono (2005), which allows literary works from different cultures to be compared in order to identify similarities and differences in themes, meanings, and cultural representations. Through this approach, the research analyzes how a similar folkloric motif is interpreted and developed within distinct cultural contexts.

The first key concept in this framework is shapeshifting. In *Lutung Kasarung*, Prince Guruminda is transformed into a black monkey as a form of divine punishment and moral testing. In *The Black Bull of Norway*, a prince is cursed into the form of a black bull and must endure a long journey filled with trials. Although both characters experience physical transformation, shapeshifting functions symbolically as a process of moral growth, self-discipline, and character development. This study examines the causes, meanings, and narrative functions of shapeshifting in both folktales.

The second key concept is cultural values. Each folktale reflects the cultural beliefs and moral ideals of the society from which it originates. *Lutung Kasarung* represents Sundanese cultural values such as humility, patience, spiritual obedience, harmony, and sincerity. Meanwhile, *The Black Bull of Norway* reflects values commonly found in British folklore, including loyalty, perseverance, endurance, and commitment. Through comparative analysis, this research explores how these values are embedded within the shapeshifting process and conveyed through the characters' actions and experiences.

To support the analysis, this study also considers narrative elements, particularly characters and plot structure. Both folktales follow a traditional narrative pattern consisting of an introduction, conflict, climax, and resolution. However, differences in how conflicts arise and are resolved reveal the influence of cultural backgrounds on narrative development and character behavior.

In addition, cultural and historical contexts are used to explain how each story has been shaped by its environment. *Lutung Kasarung* is rooted in Sundanese mythology and spiritual beliefs, while *The Black Bull of Norway* originates from British oral tradition and was later recorded in written form. These contexts help clarify how folklore functions as a medium for preserving cultural values and moral teachings.

Through the integration of these concepts—shapeshifting, cultural values, narrative elements, and comparative literature—this conceptual framework guides the analysis of both folktales. It provides a systematic structure for understanding how shapeshifting operates as a meaningful symbol and how cultural values are represented and differentiated within *Lutung Kasarung* and *The Black Bull of Norway*.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

The definition of key terms is made to clarify the meaning and avoid misunderstandings in understanding the meanings of research terms. The following is an explanation of the terms in research:

1.7.1 Shapeshifting

Shapeshifting refers to the process by which a character changes from one physical form to another, most commonly from a human into an animal or vice versa. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, shapeshifting is defined as “the power or ability to change one’s shape or form.” In literary and folklore studies, shapeshifting is closely associated with supernatural forces, curses, divine intervention, or magical circumstances.

James Danandjaja (2007) explains that in folklore, physical transformation is a common motif used to express moral testing and symbolic meaning. Transformation in folklore often reflects the relationship between humans and supernatural powers, as well as the belief that outward form does not always represent inner character. Therefore, shapeshifting in folktales functions not merely as a physical change, but as a symbolic process that represents moral growth, self-awareness, punishment, or redemption. In this study, shapeshifting is understood as a central folkloric motif that conveys cultural values through the transformation experienced by the main characters.

1.7.2 Cultural Values

Cultural values are the shared beliefs, norms, customs, and moral principles that guide the behavior and worldview of a particular society. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, values are defined as “principles or standards of behavior; one’s judgment of what is important in life.” In the context of culture, these values shape social interactions, traditions, and collective identity. In literary works, cultural values are reflected through characters, plot development, conflicts,

and moral messages, serving as representations of the social and cultural context in which the text is produced.

1.7.3 Folklore

Folklore refers to the collective traditional culture of a community that is transmitted from generation to generation, primarily through oral tradition. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, folklore is defined as “the traditional stories, customs, and habits of a particular community or nation.” This definition emphasizes folklore as a cultural inheritance that preserves shared knowledge, beliefs, and practices within a society.

James Danandjaja (2007) defines folklore as a part of culture that is spread and inherited traditionally, either orally or through examples accompanied by gestures or mnemonic devices. He explains that folklore is collective in nature, anonymous, and exists in multiple versions due to its oral transmission. Danandjaja categorizes folklore into several forms, including myths, legends, folktales, proverbs, and traditional beliefs, each of which serves different social and cultural functions within a community.

Among these forms, folktales occupy a distinctive position. Folktales are fictional narrative prose stories that are not bound to sacred belief or historical fact, yet they play a significant role in conveying moral values, social norms, and cultural ideals. According to William R. Bascom (1965), folktales function primarily as a medium of entertainment, but they also serve educational purposes by transmitting moral lessons and reinforcing acceptable patterns of behavior within society. Unlike myths, which are considered sacred, or legends, which are often linked to historical

figures or places, folktales are more flexible in structure and interpretation, allowing symbolic elements such as magical events and shapeshifting to emerge prominently.

In folktales, extraordinary motifs—such as transformation, enchantment, and supernatural intervention—are commonly used as narrative devices to explore human experiences and cultural values. Shapeshifting, in particular, functions as a symbolic mechanism through which characters undergo trials, moral testing, and personal or social transformation. As noted by Dundes (1980), symbolic motifs in folktales often reflect the psychological, moral, and cultural concerns of the society from which they originate.

In literary studies, folklore—especially folktales—is regarded as an important cultural expression that reflects a society's worldview, belief systems, social hierarchy, and ethical principles. Folktales provide insight into how a community conceptualizes morality, authority, suffering, and reward. In this research, folklore serves as the cultural foundation through which the representation of shapeshifting and cultural values is analyzed in *Lutung Kasarung* and *The Black Bull of Norway*. Both stories are examined as folktales that employ transformation motifs to communicate culturally specific values while simultaneously revealing universal narrative patterns.