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## ECOFEMINISM PERSPECTIVE ON INDONESIAN LITERARY WORKS

Ririeh Yusmarani\*

*State University of Malang*

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### ARTICLE INFO

*Article history:*

Received: 18 Mar 2019

Accepted: 30 Apr 2019

Published: 31 May 2019

*Keyword:*

ecofeminism, Indonesia  
literature, women's image

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### ABSTRACT

Various environmental issues begin to be discussed widely and the movement of women does. Ecologists come up with new ideas that there is a strong relationship between women and nature. Ecofeminist spreads to various sectors in life. Starting from the industrial, economic and political sector that are intensively making the issue of women's relations and the environment as a matter of discussion. Related to literary works, ecofeminist is going with new ideas based on literary works t in Indonesia. Indonesian literature that presents the relation between women and nature as a form of an image of women concerning the environment.

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### INTRODUCTION

The environmental issue is started from human anxiety about the unstable natural conditions (Syafrina, 2018). Nature is only the object of exploitation and dependence of life. In addition, many changes in the function of land that make nature as a dead object and replace it as an industrial area. The discourse about the destruction of the earth has unwittingly harmed women. Women have great expectations for nature because women are managers of family food security. From nature, women process vegetables, fruits, leaves, wood and water into a continuance of life. The linkage between women and nature is one of the reasons for the presence of ecofeminism. According to Candraningrum (2013: 4), the presence of ecofeminism generates a growing social movement of women in connection with the increasingly damaged nature and environment. Besides a form of a social movement, ecofeminism's background also increasingly fill the gap with Indonesian literary work.

Many Indonesian writers have brought these environmental issues into his works. Whether it is a literary work written by a female author or a male author. If we observe deeply, the author of Indonesia is able to present ideas that describe the cultural and social aspects of Indonesian society. It can be seen from the progress of writing that is increasingly in demand and the quality of some works translated into several languages. Critical latest issues are always raised to an interesting story. One of them is the issue of natural damage caused by human activities. In

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\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [ririchyuza@gmail.com](mailto:ririchyuza@gmail.com) (Ririeh Yusmarani)

addition, some of the present work is always set in various places in Indonesia and presents a story environmental and natural conditions around Indonesian society.

Ecofeminism becomes an interesting topic because of its new presence. The ecofeminism that originally started from a movement, has now developed and penetrated into various fields, especially literature. In Indonesian literature, ecofeminism has become a scattered theme in various works. Like the novels published in the 2000s, which are known to issues that are environmental crises as well as gender crises. For example, some novels by female authors; they are the series of “*Bilangan Fu*” by Ayu Utami, “*Partikel*” by Dee Lestari, and “*Lemah Tanjung*” by Ratna Indraswari Ibrahim. Explicitly, the story that constructs in the novels is a form of criticism, aspiration, and concern for Indonesia's natural conditions that are getting closer to be destructed, exploited, and polluted. In addition, patriarchal dominance always exists as like as women begin to maintain their environmental conditions.

Literary works are always associated with a reflection of life and social criticism. Literary works became a product that is still widely dissected with various theories and interdisciplinary approach, especially a novel. Currently, many novels are related to the environment that can be used as learning and new knowledge to literary studies. According to Wiyatmi, et al. (2017), through the study of literary criticism with insight of ecofeminism, it is hoped that humans will have an awareness to respect ecological sustainability and gender equality which eventually will create a generation of ecologically and feminist learner to appreciate the sustainability and balance of ecology and gender equality, so it will create a harmonious social life between human and nature.

Candraningrum (2013: 4) explains that patriarchal culture not only arises in social culture but also in nature conservation. The patriarchal culture views women and nature as objects and properties that worthy to be exploited. Therefore, ecofeminism emerges to oppose the exploitation of women and nature, including economic growth that ignores the sustainability of ecosystems and women's lives. In line with Wiyatmi's (2017: 790) *Ecofeminists Fiction Amid the Power of Patriarchal Capitalism*, Reading *Supernova 4: Partikel*, the reader can see that the problems in literary works between women and nature are very complex. Moreover, men often dominate all sectors of industry. Wiyatmi thinks that ecofeminist fiction is a fiction that carries the view or flow of thought of ecofeminism. In her research, she explained that the “*Partikel*” written by Dewi Lestari as a story depicting the movement of ecofeminism in global context against patriarchal capitalism through the conservation activities of people in Tanjung Puting National Park, Borneo.

Studies on literary theory need to evolve according to the issues that exist. If studies or are not developed, then research on the latest literature will also not embellish the development of literary theory. Research and discussion about ecofeminism that is related to literature need to be developed and discussed because at this time the theory of literature has penetrated throughout all parts of life. In addition to revealing the relationship between women and nature, the theory of ecofeminism also brings influence to the development of literary theory in Indonesia. The presence of literary ideas that only focus on the old theory impact on the narrowness of the scope of literary studies, so eventually the development of interdisciplinary science of literature to be monotonous with the existing theory. Related to the description that has been submitted, so in this article will be discussed about the representation of natural relations with women in literary works, the image of women in the conservation of nature in the literary works, and ecofeminism as the means of environmental literary works.

## **REPRESENTATION OF NATURAL RELATIONS WITH WOMEN IN INDONESIAN LITERARY WORKS**

Novels are often used as an object in literary research. As one of the literary products, the social phenomenon present in the novel is quite solid. In addition, the novel can be functioned as a form of criticism to the environmental condition. Appreciation of the novel is not enough if

only it is just to be read and examined. When the novels are begun to be examined, there are important things to consider regarding how, when, and why the novel was made. There are so many important themes that can be raised to be the story in the novel. Starting from the injustices of the state, politics, education, gender injustice, customs, and male domination to environmental and natural issues. Not only in Indonesia, but Rao (2016: 49) also reveals that in India there is a writer named Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni who is an Indian author, poet, and professor. He combines the issue of women in his works, so his works are loaded with diaspora, feminism, and ecofeminism. One of the works that strongly describes ecofeminism is *The Mistress of Spices*. The book has been adapted into a movie and won an award. In addition, Puspanathan (2016: 65) explains that it is not only Chitra's work on women and the environment. Anita Nair in her work also illustrates how Indian women are exploited in the modern era by both individuals and society. She emphasized that there is a need to create awareness for women. The role of the female protagonist in his work is aware of the injustice imposed on women in marriage. They bravely walked out from their homes.

Indonesian novels published in the 2000s raised environmental issues and women. Wiyatni, et al. (2017) reveals that there are nine Indonesian novels which the story construct full of the relationship between women and nature. The novels are “*Namaku Teveraut*” by Ani Sekarningsih, “*Seri Bilangan Fu (Bilangan Fu, Manjali and Cakrabirawa, and Maya)*” by Ayu Utami, *Lemah Tanjung* by Ratna Indraswari Ibrahim, “*Partikel*” by Dewi Lestari, “*I sing a Roman*” Papua by Dorothea Rosa, “*Amba*” by Laksmi Pamuntjak, and “*Sali*” by Dewi Linggasari. In addition, there are many other novels that promote the issue of women and nature. Indonesian female authors are quite productive in developing their ideas. When talking about ecofeminism or feminism, we need to know that not only the exploitation of a woman's body is spoken but all aspects that affect women and their behavior. Candraningrum (2015: 77-101) also explores the subjectivity of women in the novel. The novel that was appointed was Oka Rusmini's “*Tempurung*”. In her article, Candraningrum explained that the subjectivity of women in the “*Tempurung*” is clearly reflected in the main character. Overall, the female character in the novel perceives her body as an important part of her subjectivity. The subjectivity of the character is shaped by the environment and the relationship with the family. Oka Rusmini is an author who always attaches his work to Balinese custom. That is what makes Oka's work more unique than any other female authors.

If we are tracking down more deeply, the number of novels that carry the themes of women's relations with nature shows that people who still adhere to the patriarchal system do not give a lot of choices on women to be expressed. Candraningrum (2014) explains that gender roles formed by society are different. When knowledge or experience of one gender (male) is perceived as measurable and can represent society, it is ultimately imprinted in the behavior that takes place until now. Candraningrum's opinion is also clarified by Endraswara (2016: 43) that environmental issues and women are always related to the ethical behavior of a person. When you see people can blend with the environment, it can be said that someone is an independent human being. In those novels, the social identity that embedded in every female character is the independence to do something.

Sturgeon (1997: 28) explains that if there is one assumption that patriarchy equates women and nature, that feminist analysis is necessary to fully understand the origin of environmental problems. On the other hand, it is assumed that an effective understanding of the cultural subordination of women requires the environment as further analysis. Basically, everything related to the role of women to the environment and the relief of both can be seen from how the culture and experience form them. Like the female characters depicted in the Oka Rusmini's novels (*Tarian Bumi, Tempurung, dan Kenanga*). Patriarchal rules and dominance are restricting the movement for Balinese ladies. Subadio and Ihromi (1986: 47) also explained that there is still a great deal of custom dominance and the stratum in Balinese society, even in the case of marriage, there are many rules that must be obeyed even though there are some

regulations which inevitably have to be approved. If it is contradicted by the living society in the present time, the customs rules are inevitably contradictory and unfairness situation that must be fulfilled. This is supported by O'Donnell's observation (2009: 84) that many modern women in the postmodernist era do not want to return to traditional values. Women argue that they have social and militant awareness in their own way. Likewise, they maintain the nature and environment that is around them.

## **WOMEN'S IMAGES IN NATURAL CONSERVATIONS THROUGH NOVEL**

The imagery of women is often associated with patriarchal power. There are other things that have not been widely revealed that women actually play a very important role in the conservation of nature and environmental ecosystem. Candraningrum (2015: 126) reveals that women sometimes become the main subject that is always needed to exist. However, the penetration of modernization in the industrialization process makes them lose space to articulate their interests. They seem forced to silence in the circle of relations that exist as well as female characters in *Lemah Tanjung* by Ratna Indraswari Ibrahim.

In *Lemah Tanjung*, the idea of nature being the subject is very clear. The role of a female character (Ms. Indri) who maintained the forest in the midst of the rapid development of industry in Malang City makes some other female leaders support her, although there were also many people who opposed her actions. *Lemah Tanjung* was lifted from a true story about a complicated dispute between the investors and the local people and environmental activists on the environmental conservations. One of disclaimer launched by the repellent group was to reject the land to be relocated.

The novel illustrates how difficult to sustain the environment in capitalism and industry oppression. Priyatna (2017) reveals that in an ecofeminist perspective, women who are distinct and knowledgeable individuals are required to be active in managing nature as a source of life. Women's involvement in protecting nature from destruction is important not only because of their natural problems as women but also as a form of their involvement in dismantling the issue of the gender bias in environmental management. Being a female environmental activist in a big city is hard work. The presence of patriarchal dominance that penetrated into the social system of society has obliged them to be able to divide the time between active with activities outside their home and take care of the family, especially for those who are a mother. These demands make them have to be at home to complete the domestic work as well as being a "good wife" for their family.

*Lemah Tanjung* was set under the situation of the 1998 riots that cornered Chinese ethnicity. It was said that Paul Gita's husband (one of the female characters in the novel) migrated to Australia because he realized that he has a bloodline with Chinese. If we connect it with the work, according to Candraningrum (2016: 23) Soeharto's decline in 1998 followed by regional autonomy in 2000, at that time, the exploitation of Natural Resources could not be controlled properly. The exploitation was done by local politicians and businessmen. The local conscience over intrusions, interventions, and denial of the local people's ecological rights accelerated horizontal frictions and conflicts not only among the citizens. It is also in line with Fitri's opinion (2017: 85-86) that many things must be borne by the people as a result of the industrialization policies that had been carried out since the *Orde Baru* era. The growing need for land brought consequences with the increasing need for land as a place for investment. The reformation was the culmination of social movements that lead to the practice of the *Orde Baru* ideology of resistance against the people.

## **ECOFEMINISM AS A PRACTICAL SERVICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY LITERARY WORKS**

In feminism perspective, patriarchy continues to move to build new innovations in order to perpetuate its dominance structure. The shift is attributed literally to the presence of capitalism

(Walbi, 2014). Capitalism is a powerful driving factor in building a variety of patterns of gender relations. In the context of women and environmental issues, capitalism through its industrialization ideas manifests as the driving force of the environmental construction milestone as a commodity.

Ecofeminism provides criticism on the way of the view of modernity that puts nature as well as women as the object of exploitation (Warren, 1997). In addition, Susilo and Kodir (2016: 323) argue that in the general public discourse, the position of women is constructed as an opposition (binary opposition) with men. These constructs form the discourse of women who are subordinate positions which have a significant effect on social life. *Keluarga Berencana* Policy, which is the "tool" of the state to control the female body (female reproductive organs), has become popular in explaining how the power and the state collaborate on "crime" over women's bodies. In this case, women who have the wisdom of diverse choices are no longer taken into account. Therefore, ecofeminism also provides a space to conduct a movement, and it has a purpose to strengthen the meanings of the locality.

According to Endraswara (2016: 35), ecofeminism can be analyzed with various types of literary works. Ecofeminism can be attributed to spirituality, social behavior and social identity in literary works. In addition, Wiyatmi (2017: 3) also argues that the novel became one of the most desirable literary works of all time. Currently, many environmental-type novels can be used as a learning and new knowledge for literary studies. Through the study of literary criticism with the insight of ecofeminism, it is expected that humans have an awareness to appreciate ecological sustainability and gender equality that eventually slowly but surely will create a generation of learners with an ecological and feminist perspective.

Additionally, the capacity of women as authors can be the core of the study. There is an assumption that female authors carry a tendency in their work, both universally determined by women themselves, the demands of their rights and nature about nature and the environment. As a women's emancipation movement in literature, their creative activity with their imaginary capacity is a form of expression and their concern for the environment. According to Ratna, (2011: 256) women's emancipation begins with symptoms related to increasingly dynamic social mobility. The presence of female authors who exist in Indonesia led to work that apparently carries a critical issue on the environment.

## CONCLUSION

Indonesian literary works, especially novels, always come out with an important issue that is illustrated in the story. Ecofeminism views a literary work as a source of research with feminism perspective associated with the environment and nature. If we view it from the point of view of patriarchy, the relationship of women with nature is also always dominated by men and customs. The study of ecofeminism in literature can be assumed as a new issue in Indonesia. The issue of women's oppression associated with ecological issues seeks the relationship between all forms of women's oppression and nature. The image of women in ecofeminism perspective can be judged in many ways, so ecofeminism understands human relationships not only with humans with other humans but also with animals and even plants.

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