

## STUDY OF ECOFEMINISM IN THE *SAWITRI DAN TUJUH POHON KELAHIRAN* BY MASHDAR ZAINAL

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### Abstract

This study discusses the study of ecofeminism found in the novel of *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* by Mashdar Zainal. Today, women are considered to have an important role in efforts to protect and save the natural environment. The attitude of caring for the environment can also be raised in literary works, one of which is the study of ecofeminism on the novel. Ecofeminism is one of the literary studies relating to aspects of ecology and feminism contained in literary works. This research is a kind of descriptive qualitative research. The main data source of this research is the text in the novel of *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* by Mashdar Zainal related to the study of ecofeminism. The data collection technique used is content analysis. The data validity technique uses data source triangulation and method triangulation. The data analysis technique uses the content analysis method which consists of three elements, namely data reduction, data presentation, and data inference. The results of this study show that in the novel of *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* there are three forms of ecofeminism, namely natural ecofeminism, spiritual ecofeminism, and socialist ecofeminism.

**Keywords:** ecology, feminism, ecofeminism

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas mengenai kajian ekofeminisme yang terdapat di dalam novel *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* karya Mashdar Zainal. Dewasa ini, perempuan dianggap memiliki peran penting dalam upaya menjaga serta menyelamatkan lingkungan alam. Sikap peduli lingkungan tersebut dapat pula dimunculkan di dalam karya sastra, salah satunya adalah kajian ekofeminisme terhadap novel. Ekofeminisme merupakan salah satu kajian sastra yang berkaitan antara aspek ekologi dan feminisme yang terdapat di dalam karya sastra. Penelitian ini merupakan jenis penelitian kualitatif deskriptif. Sumber data utama penelitian ini adalah teks di dalam novel *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* karya Mashdar Zainal yang berkaitan dengan kajian ekofeminisme. Teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan adalah content analysis. Teknik validitas data menggunakan triangulasi sumber data dan triangulasi metode. Teknik analisis data menggunakan metode content analysis yang terdiri dari tiga laur, yaitu reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penyimpulan data. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa di dalam novel *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* terdapat tiga wujud ekofeminisme, yaitu ekofeminisme alam, ekofeminisme spiritualis, dan ekofeminisme sosialis.

**Kata Kunci:** ekologi, feminsime, ekofeminisme

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The development of human life certainly cannot be separated from the existence of literary works. Literature is part of human civilization. According to Sehandi (2014: 51), literary work is the life of an artificial or literary fiction, the nature of life that has been colored by the attitude of the author, his educational background, his beliefs, his ideals, his desires, his knowledge, his experiences, etc. The existence of literature is certainly inseparable from the position of the author. The author's view of the world can be manifested in various forms of literature. According to Susanto (2012: 10), in a sociological context, literature is seen as a cultural product of one society. This role is then to position literature as an important part of the socio-cultural development of a society.

Along with the development of the times, the position of literature is considered to have an important role for human life. Literature is an expression of human mystical and aesthetic experiences through media language as imaginative creativity (Sehandi, 2014: 6). Although, literature is considered as an imaginative work, its existence brings a great contribution to human life. Various issues that are emerging in the community can be displayed in various forms of literature. Literary characteristics that highlight the beauty aspects of language are other components that are considered attractive. The beauty element of language in literature is the implementation of the subtlety value it carries. According to Eagleton (2010: 4), literary language is a language that is 'made foreign'; and because of this 'exile', the everyday world also suddenly becomes unfamiliar. The phrase "made foreign" has the meaning that the language in literature uses connotative meaning. This is what makes literature considered to always represent aesthetic value. In addition, literature also has various contributions, one of which is as a means of internalizing positive attitudes, such as awareness in protecting the environment.

The existence of literature cannot be separated from the theme of the environment (ecology). This then led to a study related to environment and literature, namely ecocritical. Along with the development of the times, the study of literature continues to experience significant development. Interdisciplinary studies in literature also continue to develop. One of them is a study between ecology and feminism. The study then led to the term called ecofeminism. According to Endraswara (2016: 61), ecofeminism focuses more on reading literary works with women's awareness and the environment. Ecofeminism studies assume that the existence of women has a large contribution in upaa protecting and preserving the environment. Another opinion conveyed by Nhanenge (2011: 135), ecofeminism simply adds concerns about gender equality to the foundational position of deep ecology. Women are indeed considered to have the ability to manage and care for the environment. Ecofeminism studies show that the existence of literature does have a major contribution to human life. Ecofeminism is not only related to environmental phenomena, but also related to the activities of emasipation of women.

Previous research that is relevant to this research is one of them entitled *The Contribution of Ecofeminism Philosophy in Environmental Management Research*. The study, published by *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Volume 7, Number 1, January 2016, was conducted by Hamidi Ismail, Tuan Pah Rokiah Syed Hussain, and Muhammad Subhan from the University of North Malaysia. The results of this study provide an explanation that ecofeminism and thoughts about environmental care is one of the efforts made in this decade. The role of women is increasingly needed in an effort to preserve the environment. The research has similarities with this research, which is about the study of ecofeminism. However, this study is more specific using *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* by Mashdar Zainal as an ingredient in the study of ecofeminism. Another research that is relevant to this research is *Ecocritics in Indonesian Literature: An Interesting Literature Study*. The research conducted by Novita Dewi was published in the *Adabiyat Journal*, Faculty of Adab and Culture, Sunan Kalijaga State

Islamic University, Yogyakarta, Volume 15, Number 1, 2016. The study discusses the existence of ecocritics in Indonesian literature, especially novels. The research findings show that there are quite a lot of Indonesian literary works that carry the theme of the environment, but only as a time and place setting. Indonesian literature is still considered to be less serious in dealing with the problem of the environment. The research has similarities with this research, which is related to ecological themes. However, this study is more specific to discuss the themes of ecology and feminism (ecofeminism) contained in the novel of *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* by Mashdar Zainal.

This study aims to explain the study of ecofeminism found in the novel of *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* by Mashdar Zainal. There are three types of ecofeminism studies, namely natural ecofeminism; spiritual ecofeminism, and socialist ecofeminism. The existence of this research can be useful as a means of internalizing positive attitudes to preserve the environment while upholding the emancipation of women through means of using literary works.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a kind of descriptive qualitative research. Qualitative research is research that intends to understand the phenomenon of what is experienced by the subject of research, such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, actions, etc, holistically, and by way of descriptions in the form of words and language, in a specific context natural and by utilizing various scientific methods (Moleong, 2014: 6). The ecofeminism approach was used in this study. According to Endraswara (2016: 61), ecofeminism focuses more on reading literary works with women's awareness and the environment. The ecofeminism study was born as a branch of feminism that specifically addresses ecology with a feminist perspective. The main data source of this research is the text in the novel of *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* by Mashdar Zainal related to the study of ecofeminism. The novel was published by Alvabet Publisher Jakarta in 2018. The data collection technique used is content analysis. According to Moleong (2014: 279), content analysis is a research technique used for reference that is replicable and valid from the data in its context. The data validity technique uses data source triangulation and method triangulation. Triangulation of data sources is used to process data collection by utilizing various data sources. Meanwhile, triangulation methods are used to collect similar data, but by using various methods of data collection. The literature study, reading, and note taking techniques were used as the method of triangulation method in this study. The data analysis technique uses the content analysis method. The analysis technique consists of three grooves (Sutopo, 2006: 113-116), along with the explanation.

- a. Data reduction is the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, and rough data interaction in the field notes. Data is selected for similar stories that include variations or not.
- b. Data presentation is an information organization that allows conclusions of research to be carried out. The arrangement of data presentation, researchers will more easily understand the things that happened and make it possible to work on the business that will be carried out after data collection.
- c. The conclusion of data is that conclusions are carried out based on all things contained in data reduction and presentation of virgin. After the data is selected, classified, and analyzed the data is interpreted according to the structure and values contained in the story, then conclusions are drawn.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The feminist movement has a big influence on the lives of women. The existence of the feminist movement emerged as a response to the existence of a patriarchal system that developed in the community. According to Sugihartuti and Suharto (2016: 6), feminist literary criticism offers the view that female readers and female critics carry different perceptions, understandings, and guesses on the experience of reading literature compared to men. The position of women is considered equal in position to men, especially those related to the fulfillment of their rights. Another opinion delivered by Fakhri (2008: 99-100), feminism departs from the assumption that women are basically oppressed and exploited. Women's oppression is considered as a manifestation of injustice that arises because of the socio-cultural influences that develop in a community group.

The study of feminism is also closely related to literary work. According to Sugihastuti and Suharto (2016: 15-16), there are five main components in literary research using the feminist perspective:

- (1) the position and role of female leaders in Indonesian literature shows that it is still dominated by men;
- (2) from receptions of readers of Indonesian literature, at a glance it appears that the female figures in Indonesian literature lag behind men;
- (3) there is still a reception for readers of Indonesian literature that show that the relationship between men and women is only a relationship based solely on biological and social economic considerations;
- (4) Indonesian literary research has produced many changes in analysis and methodology, one of which is feminist perspective research, and
- (5) many readers consider that the role and position of women is lower than that of men, such as real perceptions of Indonesian literature .

In general, the existence of literary research with a feminist perspective refers to the view that the position of women is equal to that of men, related to the fulfillment of their rights. The patriarchal system that is often still developing in society is one of the reasons why the feminist movement is becoming increasingly developed.

One of the schools of feminism that has a major influence on human life is ecofeminism. The term ecofeminism was first introduced in the book *Le Feminism ou la Mort (Feminism or Death)* which was published in 1974. The book presents a number of information about women's oppression and the destruction of nature. According to Tong (2008: 350), ecofeminism is a thought of feminism that wants to give an understanding of the relationship between all forms of human oppression and nature and shows the involvement of women in the entire ecosystem. Women are considered to have contributed to efforts to preserve the environment. The attitude of affection for women plays a big role in efforts to care for the natural environment. Similar opinion was expressed by Wiyatmi, *et al* (2017: 10), ecofeminism is one of the thoughts and social movements that connect ecological problems with women. Women's ability to care for nature is considered an instinctive thing. This is not part of cultural products. Meanwhile, according to Warren (ed) (1997: 260), ecofeminism is a contemporary political movement operating on the theory that the ideology which sanctions the exploitation and degradation of the environment. The existence of ecofeminism has become one of the elements in reducing the impact of massive exploitation and degradation lately.

According to Tong (2008), there are three types of ecofeminism branches, namely natural ecofeminism, spiritual ecofeminism, and socialist ecofeminism. Each variety of eco-feminism has its own domain.

### 3.1 Natural Ecofeminism

According to Wiyatmi, *et al* (2017: 12), natural ecofeminism views nature/women as equal to and perhaps better than male culture. The relationship between women and nature is a unity. Fund women have mutual contributions to the life of an ecosystem. Natural ecofeminism rejects the assumed inferiority of women and nature, and the assumed superiority of men and culture (Wiyatmi, *et al*, 2017: 12). Natural ecofeminism indeed considers the position of women and nature to have the same position as the position of men. In the opinion of Endraswara (2016: 41), natural ecofeminism believes that the traits traditionally associated with women, such as caring, nurturing, and intuition, are not the result of cultural construction as a product of women's actual biological and psychological experiences. This opinion provides an understanding, that women's ability to care for nature is instinctive, not the influence of cultural products.

An explanation of the nature of ecofeminism in the novel of *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* by Mashdar Zainal is presented as follows. *Saban hari Sumitrah merendam mawar atau terkadang melati dengan air hangat dan setelah air itu mendingan dan mengeluarkan aroma harum, air rendaman kembang itu ia gunakan untuk merendam pakaiannya yang usai dicuci sebelum dijemur. Saudara-saudaranya yang lain tak ada yang melakukan hal semacam itu, atau mungkin sekadar memikirkannya, dan Sumitrah tak pernah peduli, selama apa yang ia lakukan tidak mengacau orang lain* (Zainal, 2018: 10).

The Sumitrah figure is the second child in the Sawatri's family. His mother and father have educated them to become children who understand the importance of protecting the environment. Every birth of a child in the Sawitri family is marked by planting a birth tree on the home page. Every child has a different tree. Sumitrah as the second child who has a calm and beautiful face, has a birth tree in the form of a flamboyant tree. Not only caring for flamboyant trees, he also often uses plants around his house for various purposes. Of course the use of nature is done not excessive. Sumitrah's attitude reflects the relationship between nature and women is indeed close. The attitude of women's love for nature is also reflected in the quote.

*Sumaiyah, sebagai bocah paling besar kerap mencontohkan seperti apa merawat pohon dengan baik: menyiraminya dengan teratur, menaburkan pupuk, membersihkan halaman, dan mengajak kami bercakap sesekali. Aku merasa bangga dan bahagia menjadi pohon milik Sumaiyah, gadis itu contoh yang baik bagi adik-adiknya, dan hampir semua pohon di halaman rumah ini pernah dirawat oleh Sumaiyah* (Zainal, 2018: 71).

Sumaiyah's attitude of affection and maturity in managing nature also showed to her six siblings. Sumaiyah always cared for her trees and also helped her siblings to care for good and right plants. Sumaiyah's attitude is a representation of the relationship between the ecology and the ability of women to manage the universe.

### 3.2 Spiritual Ecofeminism

According to Endraswara (2016: 36), spiritual ecofeminism is a result of the development of Starhawk and Charles Spretnek. Starhawk emphasizes women's relationship with nature, that natural works and women's works are the same. Spiritual ecofeminism also believes that the existence of women and nature is equal. Furthermore, Tong (2008: 380), based on an anthropocentric view that tried to justify human-caused harm to nature, as a view that justifies the danger caused by men to women, spiritual ecofeminism argues that there is a close relationship between environmental degradation with the belief that God gives humans "power" over the earth. Spiritual ecofeminists adhere to religion and religion, but feminists must let go of their masculine elements and go to nature to try one of the earth-based spiritualists (Endraswara,

2016: 36). Various opinions above assume that spiritual ecofeminism represents women having the ability to manage the environment based on spiritual aspects.

Explanation of the form of spiritualist ecofeminism in the novel of *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* by Mashdar Zainal is presented as follows. “*Bangun pagi adalah awal dari lancarnya setiap urusan, hanya pada pagi hari seseorang bisa berpikir lebih jernih dan memulai segala sesuatunya dengan tenang. Apa pasal, udara pagi yang kau hirup adalah sejernih-jernih udara yangd apat dihirup manusia, dan kalau kalian pernah dengar, berkah dari segala sesuatu itu ada di awal. Itulah mengapa Bapak dan Ibu membiasakan diri bangun mendahului matahari. Kelak, kalau kalian sudah dewasa menikah, dan punya anak, jangan pernah lupa pada kebiasaan bangun pagi (Zainal, 2018: 101).*”

The form of spiritual ecofeminism is always closely related between ecology and women with a spiritualist/belief perspective. The spiritual aspect here is not only defined as a religious system, but also closely related to the traditional belief system adopted by a community group. The quote above is one part of the *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* by Mashdar Zainal which describes a belief believed by the Sawitri family. The mother (Sawitri) and her husband (Syajari) besides instilling a caring attitude towards the environment, also maintaining the trust that the community upholds. One form of this belief is to start activities early in the morning. Sawitri and Syajari always educate their seven children early in the morning. This is one of the beliefs for the Javanese people, that starting an activity early in the morning will bring a lot of blessings.

The Sawitri family does not only instill a caring attitude towards the environment, but also adherence to the teachings of the religion is also firmly instilled in their children. The form of spiritual ecofeminism is illustrated in the quote below.

*Api telah mengunyah daun-daun kami dan siap menyatukannya dengan tanah, muasal dari kami. Kami telah terbiasa menyaksikan itu semua. Dan karenanya kami belajar, bahwa wadah yang cukup untuk setiap kejadian di muka bumi adalah sabar dan syukur (Zainal, 2018: 118).*

The Sawitri family always educates their children to always care about environmental sustainability. A mother who teaches her seven children to always keep the environment clean. From nature, they learn about various spiritual values, such as patience and gratitude. Nature does provide learning to humans. Therefore, ecology, feminism and beliefs that apply in people's lives are an inseparable unit.

### 3.3 Socialist Ecofeminism

According to Bhasin and Khan (1999: 6), contemporary feminism is a struggle to achieve equality, dignity, and freedom for women to choose in managing their lives and bodies, both inside and outside the household. This assumption then gave birth to the concept of socialist ecofeminism. Socialist ecofeminism is also known as transformative ecofeminism. The main concept of socialist ecofeminism is the position of women who are considered capable of managing and caring for nature based on social aspects. According to Endraswara (2016: 38-39), transformative ecofeminism (socialist) itself has six characteristics, namely:

- (1) transformative feminism recognizes the interrelationship between all operating systems,
- (2) transformative feminism emphasizes the diversity of women's experiences,
- (3) transformative feminism rejects the logic of dominance,
- (4) transformative feminism rethinks what it means to humans and constantly builds awareness
- (5) Transformative feminism relies on ethics that emphasize the values of traditional feminism that tend to intertwine, connect, and unite humans, and
- (6) transformative feminism argues that science and technology are only used to maintain the continuity of the earth.

The definition provides an understanding, that socialist ecofeminism focuses on social aspects, in terms of social relations with nature. Women have the ability to manage and care for nature based on a social perspective.

An explanation of the forms of socialist ecofeminism in the novel of *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* by Mashdar Zainal is presented as follows.

*Aku selalu bangga jika mengingat bocah perempuan itu. Hidupnya tak jauh-jauh dari pohon yang ditanam untuknya, Pohon Salam, yang juga memberi manfaat bagi beberapa tetangga yang membutuhkan bumbu dapur. Kedengarannya sangat remeh: cuma bumbu dapur, namun dibalik itu, pohon Sukaisih telah mempererat tali persaudaraan antara kami dan para tetangga. Persaudaraan yang manis. Dan itu mahal harganya (Zainal, 2018: 58).*

Social attitudes can indeed be grown from a variety of things. Ecofeminism studies also cannot be separated from the social aspects that grow in the community. The form of socialist ecofeminism shown in the above quote is a representation of the relationship between ecology, feminism, and social aspects. The three formed a synergy which later gave rise to the term socialist ecofeminism. The above quotation shows the Sawitri family's concern for the natural environment which also benefits the surrounding social environment.

The form of socialist ecofeminism can indeed be realized in various forms. The quotations below are another example of the insights in the novel of *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* by Mashdar Zainal which represent socialist ecofeminism.

*Mendengar ujaran kakaknya, Sularsih berseru lebih lantang, 'Apa? Kau mau mengambil sarang burung di pohonku? Oh tidak. Demi Tuhan, turun! Kau harus turun! Kau tidak berhak mengambilnya! Kau akan membunuh anak-anak burung itu! Turun kubilang! Kau harus turun!'" (Zainal, 2018: 92).*

The relationship between Sawitri children is sometimes also characterized by disharmony as well. Subandi as the third child in the Sawitri family often does show an attitude of indifference to the environment. In fact, he could never treat his own tamarind tree which was the birth tree planted by his father (Syajari). Sularsih (Subandi's sister) often reminds his brother to always take care of the environmental ecosystem. The social relationship between brother and sister is indeed often not getting along. However, the figure of Sularsih shows his maturity in protecting the environment through fragments of *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* by Mashdar Zainal above.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

*Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* by Mashdar Zainal is indeed one of the novels that raises the role of women in managing nature well. The main character in this novel, namely Sawitri, is a mother who strongly emphasizes the importance of caring for the natural environment. In the novel of *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* by Mashdar Zainal, the existence of a natural environment has a great influence on human life. In fact, the existence of nature is considered a symbol of human life. Every occurrence in nature is a learning material for humans to behave. Discussion of the contents of the novel indeed tends to be dominated by the study of ecofeminism. The findings in the novel of *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* by Mashdar Zainal show three forms of ecofeminism studies, namely natural ecofeminism, spiritual ecofeminism, and socialist ecofeminism.

The findings in this study can be a means to further examine the study of eco-feminism on various genres of literature, especially novels. Ecofeminism studies can be a means of environmental education by utilizing literary works. Aside from being a means of internalizing environmental education, the study of eco-feminism can also be used as an effort to reinforce

women's gender equality. Because basically, women have the ability to manage and preserve the environment.

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