



Women as Pedagogical Ecofeminist Agent in the Novel *Sawitri and Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* by Mashdar Zainal

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Abstract

This study aims to reveal the role of women as ecofeminist agents of pedagogy through the novel *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* by Mashdar Zainal (2018). This research employs a descriptive qualitative method and an ecofeminist approach, drawing on pedagogy theory. Mashdar Zainal's (2018) novel *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* serves as the primary data source for this study. Data collection techniques used reading, note-taking, and literature review. This descriptive qualitative research employs human research instruments, specifically the researcher himself. Semantic validity techniques are used in this research for data validity. Data reliability used in this research is intra-rater and expert judgment. This research employs content analysis as its data analysis technique, incorporating three activities: data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The study's results demonstrate the role of women as pedagogical ecofeminist agents, exemplified by the educational values embodied in Sawitri's character and her environmental influences, as evidenced by excerpts from Mashdar Zainal's novel *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* (2018).

Keywords: *Ecofeminism; Ecofeminist Pedagogy; Novel*

Introduction

The environment is central to human life. Natural conditions that remain well-preserved and protected demonstrate a healthy environment. This can be realized with the knowledge of many parties involved. Proper maintenance and care of the natural environment can make it a positive place suitable for human life.

Many phenomena in today's world demonstrate the damage to nature caused by human behavior. Frequent phenomena such as global warming, floods, debt fires, and others. Human irregularities, such as littering, illegal tree cutting, and a lack of awareness about environmental protection, influence these phenomena.

Environment-related issues are fascinating and significantly influence the life of literary works in Indonesia. Today's environmental issues require every individual to play a role in protecting and caring for the environment. Women play a significant role in this case. In everyday life, women tend to be close

to the environment or nature. Women also possess traits that enable them to maintain and care for the environment through their patience and thoroughness. People also consider women to play a significant role in environmental conservation efforts. The attitude of affection toward women plays a big role in efforts to care for the environment. Women exhibit a strong sense of concern for the natural environment.

Environmental and women's issues also require attention from various parties and have the potential to color the lives of literary works in Indonesia. On the other hand, the emergence of feminist and ecological literary genres (green literature), feminist literary criticism, ecocriticism, and ecofeminism serves as evidence of environmental and women's issues in Indonesian literature. Literary works such as novels also present interesting topics to discuss, including issues about the environment and women.

One novel that discusses the existence of environmental issues and women is *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* by Mashdar Zainal (2018). This novel addresses an intriguing topic to study because it is relevant to human life. This study aligns all aspects of the novel with the ecofeminist pedagogical approach. This assertion suggests that we can examine Mashdar Zainal's novel through the lens of ecofeminism theory and pedagogical theory.

Mashdar Zainal adeptly weaves a compelling narrative around environmental issues and women in this novel. Mashdar Zainal's novel, *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* (Zainal, 2018), comprises seven subchapters: (1) *Tujuh Pohon di Halaman Rumah*, (2) *Syajari & Sawitri*, (3) *Pohon-Pohon Kelahiran*, (4) *Bocah-Bocah*, (5) *Syajari & Sawitri*, (6) *Tiga Bocah Pertama*, and (7) *Yang Pulang, Yang Pergi*. Alfabeta Publishers, Jakarta, published the 290-page novel.

Mashdar Zainal's novel *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* narrates the tale of Sawitri, a mother figure who takes great care of the trees in her yard. Sawitri and her husband diligently plant and care for the trees, treating them as the birth trees for their seven children. She cares for each tree as well as she cares for her children. This novel encompasses numerous life values. The trees that Sawitri has cared for over the years hold deep significance for her, particularly when she misses her children, who have chosen their own path in life. The trees also became Sawitri's friends during her old age and after her husband's death.

Mashdar Zainal's novel *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* lends itself to a study of ecofeminism theory through the application of pedagogy theory. Ecofeminist pedagogy is a concept and movement within feminism that aims to illustrate the connection between the natural environment and women's roles. In addition, ecofeminist pedagogy views women as important and influential cultural actors who can protect and care for the environment.

In this study, the researchers conducted a literature search to identify other relevant studies. This relevant research shows that this research is a form of development from previous research that uses the ecofeminism approach in novels. Relevant research has been conducted by several researchers. For instance, Chandra (2021) conducted a study titled *The Value of Environmental Care Character Education in the Novel Sawitri and Seven Birth Trees*, written by Mashdar Zainal. The research endeavors to explore the novel's portrayal of environmental care and character education. One of the factors threatening the survival of living things in the future is students' lack of concern for environmental sustainability. It is crucial to instill in students the value of environmental care through character education.

Based on the research conducted, it is known that the novel entitled *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* by Mashdar Zainal contains environmental care character education in the form of (1) compassion for the environment; (2) equality of women's rights in managing the environment; and (3) educating the importance of protecting the environment. This research employs an ecofeminism approach, whereas Chandra's research (2021) employs an ecocritical theory approach. The resemblance between these two studies lies in the novel's title and the discussion of character education values.

Wiyatmi (2023) conducted another relevant research study, "Ecofeminist Pedagogy in Literary Learning to Cultivate Environmental Ethics Awareness." This research aims to embed and develop environmental awareness through ecofeminist pedagogy in literature classes.

The study, which spanned two semesters, involved students and lecturers from Yogyakarta State University, Sanata Dharma University, and Surakarta State University. The results showed that the learning model with the pedagogical ecofeminism approach succeeded in increasing students' awareness that they should be involved in protecting and preserving the environment.

The similarity between this research and Wiyatmi's research (2023) is that they both use the pedagogical ecofeminism approach. The difference is that this study did not involve students or lecturers, unlike Wiyatmi's (2023) study, which involved literature classes in three universities. In addition, this study focuses on one selected novel by Mashdar Zainal, which is different from Wiyatmi's (2023) study that used student essays as its data source.

Based on the background and relevant research, this study has a problem formulation in the form of describing in detail the role of female characters as pedagogical ecofeminist agents in the novel entitled *Sawitri and the Seven Birth Trees* and their influence on the environment. Mashdar Zainal portrays Sawitri's role as a mother in a way that is dominant, interesting, meaningful, and relevant to everyday life. Additionally, Sawitri's character plays a significant role in protecting the surrounding natural environment. This demonstrates the significant role that women play in addressing environmental issues within society. This research aims to reveal the role of women and the value of life in the novel. This research analysis seeks to reveal the role of women as ecofeminist pedagogical agents and their influence on the environment.

Theoretical Study

Ecofeminism pedagogy is an approach in literary theory that connects the environment and women. The figure who put forward the theory of ecofeminism is Karen J. Warren. In explaining the relationship between nature and women, Karen J. Warren states that (1) there is an important relationship between women and the natural environment; (2) understanding nature is important to gain an adequate understanding of oppression against women and oppression against nature; (3) feminist theory and practice must include an ecological perspective; and (4) solving ecological problems must include a feminist perspective (Wiyatmi, 2017: 14).

Ecofeminism is also a movement that connects ecological problems with women (Chandra, 2019: 77). The movement carried out by women was carried out as an effort to realise the importance of the role or image of women disseminated through literature (Barry, 2009: 116). In this case, women are also considered to have a role in environmental conservation efforts.

Ecofeminism is a school of thought and feminist movement that seeks to show the relationship between all forms of human oppression, especially women, and nature. Ecofeminism views that women are culturally associated with nature. Researchers in this study interpret ecofeminist pedagogy as an approach to uncover the role of women and educational values in novels that impact the environment.

Method

Research Design

The research, titled *Women as Ecofeminist Pedagogical Agents in the novel Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* by Mashdar Zainal, is a descriptive qualitative study that employs an ecofeminism

approach. We conducted this research by intensively reading the novel and then proceeded to collect and interpret the data through quotations that depict women as pedagogical ecofeminist agents.

The data sources in this research consist of primary and secondary data sources. Mashdar Zainal's novel *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* serves as the primary data source for this research. We obtain secondary data sources from various books and journals that focus on women, novels, ecofeminism, life values, and literary learning.

Data Collection

This research gathers words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs from the novel excerpts that embody ecofeminist pedagogical principles and align with the problem formulation. The data collection techniques in this research consist of reading, note-taking, and literature review. Researchers employ the reading technique, which involves reading the complete novel, *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran*, by Mashdar Zainal. Researchers can carefully, repeatedly, and intensively engage in the reading process to obtain the necessary data for their research. The note-taking technique follows the reading method. We use this note-taking technique to document our findings after completing the reading technique. We use this technique to document the values of ecofeminism and pedagogy in Mashdar Zainal's novel, which align with the formulation of the problem. The next technique involves conducting a literature review, where we search for several relevant references related to the study's topic.

Data collection directs the researcher's focus and attention towards the novel being studied, aiming to achieve the best possible results. In this descriptive qualitative research, the researcher himself serves as the human instrument. This implies that the researcher will personally carry out all research-related activities. These activities encompass the planning process, data collection, data analysis, and the reporting of research results in the form of conclusions relevant to the study topic.

Data Analysis

This research also employs tools, specifically data analysis guide instruments, to streamline the data collection process. The data analysis guide instrument will serve as a reference to streamline the data analysis process when composing quotations from Mashdar Zainal's novel. Mashdar Zainal's novel features a female character named Sawitri as the subject of our study.

The data validity technique in this research uses a semantic validity technique to measure the level of sensitivity of a technique with symbolic meanings that are relevant to the context. Furthermore, this research relies on intra-rater and expert judgement for reliability.

This research employs a document analysis technique, also known as content analysis or content study. Data analysis in this descriptive qualitative research is carried out with three activities, namely data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification.

Result and Discussion

Mashdar Zainal's research, "Women as Pedagogical Ecofeminist Agents in the novel *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran*," employs a descriptive qualitative approach and focuses on ecofeminism, particularly natural ecofeminism. The natural ecofeminism approach takes into account the role of women in protecting their environment. Women have an important role in protecting the environment.

Natural ecofeminism believes that traits traditionally associated with women, such as caring, nurturing, and intuition, are not so much a result of cultural construction as a product of women's actual biological and psychological experiences. This proves that women's ability to care for nature is

instinctive, not a cultural influence. This statement is very relevant to the role of a woman named Sawitri in protecting her environment.

The novel *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* has outstanding ecofeminism and character education values. This novel tells the story of a mother named Sawitri who lives with her husband named Syajari. They celebrate the birth of each of their seven children by planting a tree. The first child, Sumaiyah, receives a mango tree. The second child, Sumitrah, received a flamboyant tree. The third child, Subandi, was given a tamarind tree. The fourth child, Sularsih, was named after a sawo tree. There is also a salam tree for the birth of the fifth child named Sukaisih. The sixth child, Sunardi, is represented by a jamblang tree. Lastly, a Ketapang tree was planted for the seventh child, Sundari.

Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran tells the story of a mother in a dominant way. The mother's attitude of caring for the environment is the main attraction in this novel. Sawitri is very sincere in taking care of the trees in her neighborhood. She cares for the trees wholeheartedly, just as she cares for her seven children. The trees are silent witnesses to Sawitri's inner turmoil as a woman and her struggle to care for her sick husband, her longing for her children who have migrated, and her struggle against the loneliness of being a widow after her husband died.

In this novel, there are eight quotations that describe the role of women as pedagogical ecofeminist agents in *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* by Mashdar Zainal. The role of mothers as pedagogical ecofeminist agents is shown by the attitudes and perspectives of Sawitri's characters, who love trees, care for trees, and protect the environment. Sawitri's actions embody the role of women as pedagogical ecofeminist agents. Sawitri's character in this novel also reveals character education values, which potentially motivate readers to participate in environmental protection.

Sawitri as an Ecofeminist Pedagogical Agent by Loving Trees

Mashdar Zainal's novel *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* features three quotes that highlight Sawitri's love for trees.

This woman tends to the plants that grow in her room. Menyayangi dari akar sampai ujung daunnya. Pohon-pohon itu wujud lain dari anak-anaknya. Selepas meletakkan sapu lidi, biasanya ia akan duduk di lincak di sudut beranda sambil menatap pohon-pohon itu. Seperti mengajak mereka bicara. (Zainal, 2018:2)

This quote highlights Sawitri's role as a pedagogical ecofeminist agent. The novel portrays Sawitri's deep affection for the trees she planted with her husband, serving as a symbolic representation of her children's birth trees. Sawitri's affection for the trees represents her love for her children, who have chosen their path in the overseas land.

Seperti pada waktu-waktu yang tak pasti, aku kerap terduduk, tercenung di beranda rumah ini, memandangi tujuh pohon kelahiran yang menjulang dan berjajar nyaris simetris di halaman. Tujuh pohon itu memiliki kisahnya sendiri-sendiri, seperti tujuh bocah kami yang beranjak dewasa dengan kisahnya masing-masing. (Zainal, 2018:48)

According to the quote, Sawitri's habit of gazing at the trees on the house's veranda demonstrates her love for trees. This has become her daily habit. Sawitri always related her children's lives to the existence of the trees. Basically, Sawitri did this because she could not resist the longing that a mother figure feels for her children.

Ibu menegakkan badannya dan tersenyum kepada Sukaisih kecil, "Ibu kan sudah pernah bercerita bahwa daun dari pohonmu ini memiliki aroma harum. Daun ini bisa dimanfaatkan sebagai bumbu dapur untuk memasak soto, gulai, dan bahkan tumis." (Zainal, 2018:100)

The quote highlights Sawitri's love for trees. She always tells her children about the benefits of each tree she plants. In addition, she often shares vegetables or fruit from the trees she has planted in the yard. She does this to keep in touch with her neighbours in the neighbourhood.

Sawitri as an Ecofeminist Pedagogical Agent by Caring for Trees

Two quotes from Mashdar Zainal's novel *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* feature Sawitri's character, who cares for trees.

Sereng kali, perempuan itu menyiramkan air cucian beras ke bonggol tubuhku. Aku mengisap air itu dengan sukacita. Air cucian beras yang beraroma beras. Beras yang bermula dari sebutir padi yang tumbuh dan mengecap saripati tanah. Sama sepertiku. Nikmat sekali. (Zainal, 2018:69)

The quotation highlights Sawitri's dedication to caring for the trees through the act of pouring rice and washing water. Sawitri doThe novel also portrays the viewpoint of the trees, who are content with Sawitri's meticulous care and treatment of them. the trees so well.

Tidakkah kau lihat Bapak dan Ibu, mereka yang menanamku dan merawatku? Mereka bertambah tua setiap detik, dan mereka tak pernah menyemir rambut mereka ataupun berusaha supaya selalu tampak muda. (Zainal, 2018:114)

Based on the quotation, the tree's perspective reveals Sawitri and her husband's attitude towards its care. Sawitri and her husband like to plant trees in their yard and take excellent care of them. The quote also describes the condition of Sawitri and her husband, who are no longer young. This shows that Sawitri and her husband have taken care of the trees for many years. Even though she is no longer young, she still maintains her love for trees.

Sawitri as an Ecofeminist Pedagogical Agent by Protecting the Environment

Three quotations from Mashdar Zainal's novel *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* feature Sawitri's character, who protects the environment.

Perempuan pemilik rumah itu kerap membersihkan daun-daun dari dua pohon itu pagi atau sore hari. Aku kerap melihat perempuan itu tebungkuk-bungkuk mengongkang sapu lidi. Beberapa hari sekali, perempuan itu membakar daun-daun yang sudah ia kumpulkan di pojok halaman. (Zainal, 2018:83)

Based on this quote, one of the yard's trees reflects Sawitri's attitude towards environmental protection. Every morning and evening, Sawitri sweeps her yard using a broomstick. Sawitri also burns the leaves she has collected over several days in the yard's corner.

The novel also presents the perspective of the seven birth trees in observing Sawitri's daily behavior. Sawitri is a diligent person and likes to keep the environment clean. This demonstrates her love for nature and serves as a form of environmental protection.

Jadi, Ibu mendekati kami ketika menyapu daun-daun kami yang mengotori halaman. (Zainal, 2018:110)

The quotation describes Sawitri's attitude towards protecting her environment. When Sawitri approached one of the trees to sweep the leaves littering the yard, the tree's perspective conveyed this.

Esok harinya, ketika matahari mulai mengintip di cakrawala, Ibu sudah muncul dari balik pintu dengan membawa sapu dan cikrak. Dengan tubuh tuanya, ia membungkuk-bungkuk membersihkan daun di seantero halaman. (Zainal, 2018:115)

According to the quote, Sawitri's morning habit demonstrates her attitude towards environmental protection. Sawitri always brings a broom and a cikrak to the yard when the sun begins to rise. Despite her age, Sawitri sincerely sweeps the scattered leaves in the large yard. This demonstrates how the novel portrays Sawitri's commitment to environmental protection, even in her advanced age.

Conclusion

The research yields the following conclusions. First, Mashdar Zainal's novel *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran* exemplifies the role of women as ecofeminist pedagogical agents. This study shows the influence of the role of women as evidenced by the discovery of the image of a female character named Sawitri and her role towards the environment in the novel *Sawitri and the Seven Birth Trees* by Mashdar Zainal (2018) and the role of women as pedagogical ecofeminist agents as evidenced by the educational values in the role of Sawitri's character who affects the environment through the novel *Sawitri and the Seven Birth Trees* by Mashdar Zainal (2018).

Second, upon rereading and comprehending the meaning of *Sawitri dan Tujuh Pohon Kelahiran*, a novel by Mashdar Zainal, I found it to be replete with strong ecofeminism and character education values. The novel narrates the story of a dominant mother figure, making it a pertinent subject for study within the framework of natural ecofeminism. In this novel, the mother's role as an ecofeminist pedagogical agent manifests in three ways: Sawitri's love for trees, her care for them, and her protection of the environment. Eight quotations in *Sawitri and the Seven Birth Trees* by Mashdar Zainal illustrate this.

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