




Fighting Against Deforestation: Ecofeminism in *Luh Ayu Manik Mas Hero of the Forests*

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| ARTICLE INFO | ABSTRACT |
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| <p><i>Keywords:</i> Deforestation, Ecofeminism, Balinese Girl</p> <p><i>Received :</i> 6, March <i>Revised :</i> 20, April <i>Accepted:</i> 25, May</p> <p>©2024 Wardhani, Pertiwi, Hardono(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Atribusi 4.0 Internasional.</p>  | <p>Deforestation is a serious threat for all creatures on earth. As its impacts may destroy various sectors, some women concern to the issue of that environmental damage. They bring the spirit of ecofeminism. This paper aims to discuss ecofeminism concept in a pictorial teen story <i>Luh Ayu Manik Mas: Hero of the Forests</i>. Based on its setting, Luh Ayu Manik as the Balinese girl, fights against deforestation and tries to do reforestation in Bali. Her sense of nurturing for environment is inspired by ecofeminism and Balinese environmental values. This analysis uses ecofeminism concept by Vandana Shiva and qualitative methods. The results are that patriarchy tends to triggers deforestation, while as a young lady, Luh Ayu Manik struggles to eradicate deforestation. She proves that woman is able to empower herself to fight against patriarchy that harm the environment.</p> |

INTRODUCTION

"Hutan untuk kesejahteraan" (Forests for Prosperity)

A phrase found on the Indonesian one hundred rupiah money is not just a series of words. Forests have infinite benefits for humans. Without forests, you can imagine what would happen to human life and the surrounding environment. These effects include a lack of clean air supply and an imbalance in water management which will cause a domino effect, namely a number of natural disasters such as floods and landslides. These effects can be said to not occur immediately and have bad consequences for human life. Therefore, humans are reckless and arbitrarily exploit forests without thinking about the long-term impacts that will arise in the future.

The existence of forests that are so meaningful to humans makes the Balinese people consider forests to be places that must be properly protected. Principally, human must be controlled by rules to avoid their over actions. The rules are governmental law and local wisdom. The local wisdom applied is *Tri Hita Karana*. Balinese Hindus value put *Tri Hita Karana* as their daily life principle. *Tri Hita Karana* arranges three human's relations, these are relation with Gods, other humans and environment. (Suadnyana, 2021.) It contains the principle of balance. Human should apply those three ways in order to avoid environmental damage. For example, if human exploits forest in Bali exaggeratedly, the animals living there will lose their home. The availability of ground water will shrink, there is no natural air filter and other negative impacts. One of the local wisdoms that is obeyed by everyone who build something in Bali is that the building must not be higher than coconut tree. The environmental awareness spirit actually must be applied in preserving forest.

Despite those applied rules, deforestation has been still occurring in Bali. It was stated that in 1917 the woods located in West Bali used as the Nature Park 'Taman Perlindungan Alam', its area was totally 20,600 hectares. Moreover, in 1919 Sangeh (Gianyar regency, Middle Bali) was also used as the Nature Park. In 1924, the forests in Bali were decided as the forest preserve *Hutan tutupan* (closed forest). Those divisions of the woods in Bali were part of the territorial politics carried out by the Dutch government and the independent government. After Indonesian independence, starting in 1950, Indonesian government expanded the area of state forests. (Dharmika et al., 2022). However, they found difficulties due to the attitude of communities living surrounding the protected forest. The irresponsible people have been deforesting by illegal logging, forest fire, and exploiting other materials such as sand, stone, and soil for supporting development.

The phenomenon of deforestation may be a good lesson for children and teenagers in order to avoid the more damaging deforestation. The moral values of conservating the forest does not only come from school subjects. At school, the students will feel like being ordered. Therefore, to make them naturally aware of nature conservation, reading literary works can be a good way to send the message. It inspires the creation of a literary works containing the lesson of forest

conservation. One of the literary works that teaches children and teenager of how to preserve the forest is *Luh Ayu Manik Mas: Tresna ring Alas* (Hero of the Forest).

Luh Ayu Manik Mas: Tresna ring Alas (Hero of the Forest) is a pictorial teen story written by I Made Sugianto and illustrated by Gus Dark. It comes in three languages version: Balinese, Indonesian and English. This edition was published in 2019 by BASAbali Wiki Foundation. It tells about a teen girl named Luh Ayu Manik who is concerning of the natural disaster caused by deforestation. She makes some movements to eradicate the illegal logging. She transformed herself into a female superhero, hence she could fight against those who do illegal logging. Luh Ayu Manik's concerning of deforestation is properly analyzed by theory of ecofeminism. The spirit of ecofeminism encourages woman to avoid and eradicate environmental damage and it believes that the environmental damage is caused by patriarchal principles.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Ecofeminism by Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies

Ecofeminism emerged in the late 1970s and the early 1980s. The background behind the emerging ecofeminism may be rooted in several ecological movements conducted by women around the world. Ecofeminism is a part of the third-wave of feminism which was firstly acknowledged by Francoise d'Eaubonne in 1974. She argued that the oppression, domination, exploitation, and colonisation of Western patriarchal societies have directly caused irreversible environmental damage. Francoise in her main thoughts always pushes for the elimination of all social injustice, not just injustice against women and the environment (d'Eaubonne, 2022). Unlike the other strands of feminism, ecofeminism provides a new approach in environmental ethics. Its scope is broadened not only between humans but also humans with the environment as stated by (Tuana & Tong, 2018). Feminist perspective is employed to disassemble structures of women and nature oppression.

In Europe, women were struggling for the anti-militarism movement, as well as in the USA for the zero waste movement. Meanwhile in India, Chipko movement led by women in particular to save the forest and trees. The term 'ecofeminism', however, was firstly coined by Francoise d'Eaubonne, the French writer, in 1974. Later, ecofeminism developed by Ynestra King in 1976, and led to the movement initiation in 1980. The first conference about ecofeminism was held in Amherst, Massachusetts, titled "Women and Life on Earth: Ecofeminism in the 80s." The conference was then followed by the formation of an anti-militarist, anti-nuclear weapon, and ecological organization, the Women's Pentagon Action.

Environmental problems become a major and factual issue across nations. One of the most crucial issues is related to forest; deforestation and forest fire. Those issues bring negative impacts to the ecosystem sustainability. Furthermore, those also impact not only local, but also national or even international society. Vandana Shiva, an Indian ecofeminist, as well as other ecofeminists, rejects any actions that impact on ecosystem sustainability. In 1991 Shiva founded a national organization called Navdanya. Its goal was to protect

biodiversity, integrity of living resources and the struggles of local farmers in terms of developing indigenous seeds (Shiva, 2017).

Shiva's critical thought resulted from her concern on the increasing feminism ideology which is dominated by a western tradition thought; the principle of masculinity. Vandana Shiva raises the awareness of modern society on the importance of reviving the quality values of femininity. Values are an important element for the formation of ideologies. The values of femininity and masculinity form an ideology that is opposing ideologies. These two ideologies influence the development of human mindset in personal relationships and public policy making that will have a structural impact structurally. The values of femininity are characterized by peace, safety, love, and togetherness in contrast to the values of masculinity which is characterized by competition, domination, exploitation, and oppression (Suliantoro & Murdiati, 2019). The development of femininity values leads to a culture of life while the development of masculinity leads to a culture of destruction (Shiva, 1997). Shiva invites all humans to rise up to preserve and live the values of femininity so that the destruction of nature can be prevented and the injustice against women can be stopped.

Shiva expands the scope of democracy not only limited to relations with fellow human beings, but to all beings. Shiva applied the principles of democracy to all beings. All beings need to be respected, protected and valued because each is intrinsically valuable. Moral relations should not only apply in relation to fellow humans, but also in relation to non-human beings, such as the treatment of animals, plants and animals. treatment of animals, plants and other natural mistreatment of animals, plants and objects in nature is considered unethical (Suliantoro & Murdiati, 2019).

The process of composing this research was surely supported by some previous researches. Previous studies are useful to get the novelty for this article. Since this article discusses ecofeminism in a pictorial teen story taking setting in Bali, the searching of previous studies would focus on ecofeminism (from the theory used) and *Luh Ayu Manik Mas: Hero of the Forests* (from the material object). From the point of view of ecofeminism, there is an article entitled *Bali Ecofeminism Dramaturgy in Arja Siki Campaign for Water Governor Candidates by Cokorda Sawitri*. It discusses the role of woman in water maintenance. In Balinese Hindu mythology, there is Dewi Danu as the goddess of water. Her representation is performed in Arja Siki (Balinese folk theatre). Dewi Danu in Arja Siki (starred by Cokorda Sawitri) criticizes water resources in Bali which decreases due to environmental issue. (Agustina et al., n.d.).

For more specific ecofeminism, there is a concept by Vandana Shiva. An article applying ecofeminism by Vandana Shiva is *Implementation of Vandana Shiva's Ecofeminism in 'Maleficent' Film on Literature Learning*. It discusses representation of women and nature in a movie *Maleficent*. This film represents the exploitation of nature by humans which goes hand in hand with the oppression of women, so that the liberation of nature must be carried out by dismantling the relationship between men (rulers) and women. (Hariyati & Tjahjono, 2022).

In addition, from the material object, there is an article using *Luh Ayu Manik Mas* stories. The first research is about the representation of female superheroes from Bali. The objects of this research are four story series: *Pahlawan Lingkungan (Defender of the Environment)*, *Tresna Ring Alas (Hero of the Forest)*, *Ngae Perpustakaan Keliling (Creating Mobile Library)*, and *Nglawan Luu Plastik (Fighting Against Plastic Waste)*. The superhero who is the main character, *Luh Ayu Manik*, is described as the embodiment of a Balinese girl who upholds the principles of Balinese values, including *Tri Datu* and *Tri Hita Karana*. The results of that research are that *Luh Ayu Manik Mas* is a representation of a female hero who was glorified by Hinduism as the dominant religion in Bali, when Balinese culture was still full of a patriarchal system. (Utami et al., 2021).

By reviewing those studies, this article gets its novelty since it gives something new in ecofeminism studies. Furthermore, it will enrich the studies which are based on Balinese culture. Hopefully this article may inspire women to fight against deforestation and men to stop damaging the environment.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs qualitative methods since it represents the data in the form of words and pictures rather than numbers. The importance of every single word and utterance in this research could not be denied due to the aim of this study to deliberately explain the phenomenon. The phenomenon stated in the pictorial story entitled *Luh Ayu Manik Mas: Tresna ring Alas (Hero of the Forest)* become the primary data in this research, while the secondary data are in the form of reference books, journals, theses, or other sources of information that assist analysis. Thus, in this research, the researcher plays an important role as it is the key instrument starting from gaining the data till the conclusion drawing. Since it belonged to qualitative research, the natural setting was required (Creswell, 2016).

In analyzing the data, there were some techniques applied. Those techniques were completed after obtaining data which included three activities, namely (1) collecting the data and analyzing it, (2) classifying the data, (3) drawing temporary conclusions, (4) checking the existing data, and (5) drawing final conclusions (Hennink et al., 2020). The presentation of the results of the data analysis was done informally, using words and sentences. As it is stated by (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). The data collected take the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. Therefore, the data were analyzed with all of their richness as closely as possible to the form in which they were recorded or transcribed.

DISCUSSION

Balinese Values in Preserving Environment

Luh Ayu Manik is a Balinese teen girl and her religion is Hindu. Therefore, her way of life and what she does daily are based on Balinese Hindu teachings. Balinese Hindu teachings contain the values for preserving nature. The common and famous local wisdom in Bali is *Tri Hita Karana*. It controls human relationship with other things around. *Tri Hita Karana* consists of *Parahyangan*, *Pawongan*, and *Palemahan*. *Parahyangan* is the relation between human and Gods. *Pawongan* is the relation between human and human. *Palemahan* is the relation between human and nature. *Palemahan* comes from the term *lemah* which means ground. *Palemahan* can also be called as *bhuwana agung* (universe). Human (*bhuwana alit*) lives on the earth, so that they have to make balance in utilizing the earth. Human must be wise in it. The concept of *Rwa Bhinneda* which emphasizes on balancing two opposite things takes part in what humans do on earth. Humans take advantage from universe, that is why they must not exploit too much. All things need balance, including treating the environment. (Widyani & Juliawan, 2021)

From the sub concept of *Tri Hita Karana*, that is *Palemahan*, there is one more sub concept related to *Palemahan*. *Palemahan* as the main concept of controlling the relation between humans and environment, is pursued into more specific concept that is *Sad Kerthi*. *Sad Kerthi* contains *Atma Kerthi* (purifying human soul to keep Sang Hyang Atma's spirit in human), *Samudra Kerthi* (purifying the ocean), *Wana Kerthi* (purifying the forest), *Danu Kerthi* (purifying the water sources such as river and lake), *Jagat Kerthi* (balancing human's surrounding to get harmonized), and *Jana Kerthi* (increasing human's quality of kindness). (Saputra & Heppyana, 2023) Emphasizing the forest preservation, *Wana Kerthi* which teaches human to keep the forest green explains that forest has three main functions, these are *Maha Wana*, *Sri Wana*, and *Tapa Wana*. They are described as (1) *Maha Wana* (forest as a source of life); (2) *Tapa Wana* (forest as a spiritual means); (3) *Sri Wana* (forest as a means/resource of the community's economy). (Sutana et al., 2021) *Wana Kerthi* is manifested in some real ways in life to keep the environment from too much exploitation. The things done are:

1. Enacting a religious ceremony named *Tumpek Wariga*.

This ritual is for respecting Sanghyang Sangkara (guardian of all plants), and sending wishes to get the healthier plants. It also aims to 'humanize' the plants, treat plants like treating humans.

2. Building *Pura Alas Angker* (sacred forest temple).

Pura Alas Angker is built in the middle of a forest. *Pura* or Hindu temple is a holy and respected place in Bali. *Alas* means forest, and *angker* means sacred and haunted. If there is a *pura alas angker* in a forest, it means that the forest is respected too. Therefore, humans may not do bad things there otherwise they get a bad karma.

3. Wearing *saput poleng* on trees.

Saput poleng is black and white cloth in tartan motifs. In Bali, old trees generally wear *saput poleng*. It symbolizes that the trees are forbidden to cut. If the tree must be cut, there must be a ritual to ask for permission to the unseen guards. The trees worn *saput poleng* are not only in forest but also every place in Bali.

4. Applying *awig-awig* for forest conservation

Since long time ago, the ancient Balinese society had local rules to keep the forest namely *awig-awig*. Balinese royal government put rules to punish everyone who cut the tree without the king's permission. (Sutana et al., 2021).

The principles of *Tri Hita Karana* and *Sad Kerthi* along with the implemented actions root from a basic teaching by symbolization namely *kadi manik ring cecupu*. It means a fetus in a womb. Human is symbolized as *manik* (fetus), and nature is symbolized as *cupu* (womb). Therefore, nature means mother for human. If nature is damaged, human will get the direct impacts too. (Suja & Murti, 2022). The sub part of *Sad Kerthi* that is *Wana Kerthi* principles may unity with ecofeminism and support each other. *Wana Kerthi* teaches how to preserve forest and so does ecofeminism. Luh Ayu Manik as the Balinese girl who concerns to deforestation, has Balinese spirit of preserving forest. Moreover, she brings the soul of ecofeminism as preserving forest cannot run without sense of nurturing.

Patriarchy In Deforestation

The main character, Luh Ayu Manik, concerns about the flood destroying a village. She saw the phenomena of tied logs flown by river, cleared land and damaged bridge. Therefore, she invited her friends to plant trees in the upper land in order to reduce landslide if there is another flood. She gets more concern seeing the forest has been cleared-cut. She wonders how could it happen, and she asks why the forest rangers let it happened.

Luh Ayu Manik thinks how can the officials are careless about environmental damage. They seem like caring and they say their commitment to save the nature. However, it is nonsense, because there is no action from them. "She thought about the officials who talked about taking care of the environment to look good but didn't do anything about it." (BASAbali & Sugianto, 2019)



In the picture, the image of official is represented by a man holding a mini tree. Officials as the top-positioned stakeholder hopefully are able to control environmental damage. The rules which come from the highest official will be obeyed by the lower officials and so on. Nevertheless, if the wisdom is weak and no action, the things happen in real will be much uncontrollable. Officials or let us say government which are dominated by men contribute to what happen in the environment of area they govern. In real, the damage is getting serious, it means that indirectly environmental damage is caused by patriarchal system.

Another reality of patriarchy in environmental damage is that the people who cleared the forest are all men. Is there any woman

who hold a chainsaw and cut trees? In the picture, there is an image of a hand holding a chainsaw. The hand seems strong and brawny, and that is proper enough to represent a man's hand. In front of the hand, there are cut-down trees and the atmosphere seems so hot. It means that, patriarchal system works perfectly from the highest until the lowest part. No action of controlling from officials is completed by the real action of damaging from the lowest position, in this case is executor.

The executor of cutting tree is clearly represented as male. He is considered as a thief and does the illegal logging.

"When the girls arrived at the edge of the forest, they heard an awful noise. It was the sound of chainsaws! The clearcutting criminals were already there. They crept along slowly, looking for the culprit. Peeking from behind a large log, the girls could see a man cutting trees.." (BASAbali & Sugianto, 2019)

Luh Ayu Manik and Luh Putu Suastini peek him and see what he does. They are going to go to police station and report the theft. The two girls explain how the thief looks like and report the case. However, the policeman does not believe them and doubt of false-accusing person. To make the case clear and the thief is arrested, he must be red-handed witnessed and arrested. Luh Ayu Manik gets angry due to being doubted.

She was angry that the police would not investigate a citizen's report. It seemed that all her work was for nothing, and she had little hope that she would ever be able to stop the thieves. (BASAbali & Sugianto, 2019)

The inability of policeman in processing the report strengthens the image that patriarchy perpetuates environmental damage. Furthermore, the reporters are girls, the policeman feels like underestimating the report.

Sense of Nurturing the Environment

Luh Ayu Manik put so much attention to the environmental damage and gives real actions. She invited her friends to plant trees (including her male friends). She realizes that the effect of deforestation will attack many sectors. The impact starts from the rainfall which is not held out because the forest has no tree. The next impact is shrinking water, when the land is lack of water, people cannot get clean water for daily. Farmers cannot run the agricultural process well. The impacts will attack the humans themselves. Besides inviting friends to plant trees, Luh Ayu Manik also invite her male friends to scare the wood thieves. They wear masks of Rangda and Celuluk.



In Balinese Hindu belief, Rangda is the manifestation of Goddess Durga. She changed herself into Rangda due to her black magic (*pangleyakan*). In Bali, the goddess Durga is primarily associated with violent and negative attributes. (Weiss, 2017) Goddess Durga is worshipped in *Pura Dalem* (the temple which is usually close to graveyard), therefore the presence of Rangda has scare vibes. (Atmadja et al., 2015) Rangda mask and costume are frequently performed in a sacred Balinese Hindu magical event, Calonarang, together with Celuluk. Luh Ayu Manik asked her two male friends to be Rangda and Celuluk in order to scare

the thieves.

However, the boys are failed in scaring the thieves, even they laugh at those Rangda and Celuluk – like. Luh Ayu Manik takes action by transforming herself into a female superhero Luh Ayu Manik Mas.

Luh Ayu Manik saw what was happening to her friend, and knew she had to help. She looked for a place to hide, and quickly changed into her alterego, Luh Ayu Manik Mas. Her golden crown and armbands flashed in the light. She struck at the thief with her supernatural sakti weapon, knocking the chainsaw from the man's grasp. With a lightning strike to his heart, the man collapsed. .” (BASAbali & Sugianto, 2019)



As a girl which has supernatural power, Luh Ayu Manik is able to defeat the thieves by herself. Even she can act without man's help. She brings the spirit of ecofeminism by nurturing the environment. As a woman, she has the sense of nurturing environment by trial of nature conservation such as planting trees. Her nurturing begins by her concern of disasters caused by natural disasters due to deforestation.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Forest has many advantages for human life. However, deforestation is an environmental issue in Indonesia, moreover its impacts can strike many aspects. This issue triggers women's concern by bringing spirit of ecofeminism. Ecofeminism puts a trust that environmental damage is commonly caused by patriarchal principle and it distracts women's life because women get the most impacts of environmental damage. Therefore, by sense of nurturing in women, environmental damage can be healed. A pictorial children story which contains those messages is *Luh Ayu Manik Mas: Hero of the Forests*. It contains the values of ecofeminism along with Balinese values regarding environment. The main character, *Luh Ayu Manik*, proves that she is a Balinese girl who brings the spirit of Balinese wisdom and sense of nurturing the environment. Her Balinese values start from *Sad Kerthi* principles emphasizing on *Wana Kerthi* (caring the forest). She proves the soul of ecofeminism by fighting against deforestation and doing reforestation. In conclusion, ecofeminism may inspire women to act more for caring environment because they have more sense of nurturing.

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