

A REPRESENTATION OF HUMAN AND NATURE IN SARAS DEWI'S POEM, *KEKASIH TELUK*

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Received: 28/04/2024

Accepted: 30/04/2024

Publication: 30/04/2024

Abstract

Literature possesses a unique ability to deeply engage human senses and emotions, forging a profound connection between individuals and the themes encapsulated within literary works. This research investigates the ecological themes interwoven throughout Saras Dewi's poem, *Kekasih Teluk*, offering a poignant reflection on humanity's relationship with the natural world. Employing a qualitative research approach rooted in the hermeneutic method, the research interprets Dewi's *Kekasih Teluk* to illuminate her exploration of environmental concerns such as deforestation, pollution, and biodiversity loss. Through careful analysis, the study reveals Dewi's critique of environmental exploitation, lamentation of ecological degradation, and advocacy for harmonious coexistence with nature. Drawing on ecocritical theory, which explores the intersections between literature and environmental consciousness, this research underscores the power of literature to inspire environmental awareness and action. Saras Dewi's *Kekasih Teluk* serves as a call for environmental stewardship and sustainable living, urging readers to reevaluate their relationship with the Earth. By elucidating the ecological narratives within Dewi's *Kekasih Teluk*, this analysis highlights the role of literature in fostering a deeper understanding of the intricate interplay between culture and the environment. Largely, this study emphasizes the transformative potential of literature in addressing pressing environmental issues and shaping attitudes towards ecological sustainability. Through critical analysis and interpretation, literature continues to serve as a catalyst for informed dialogue and proactive measures towards a more sustainable future.

Keywords: ecocriticism, environmental awareness, environmental stewardship, environmental themes

Introduction

Literature possesses a profound ability to engage the human senses through its intricate use of language as an art form. This engagement fosters an emotional resonance between individuals and the content encapsulated within literary works, enriching the sensory experience and facilitating a deeper exploration of the multifaceted phenomena within the human sphere and its surrounding environment (Rahmatia, Rimasi, & Lering, 2023). Writers often draw inspiration from human life events and environmental issues, crafting literary works that delve into these subjects.

Poetry embodies the beauty and essence of language through its linguistic density, conveying implicit messages and hidden meanings within its verses. This complexity allows poetry to serve as a vehicle for profound exploration and analysis of various issues (Pradopo, 2014). The density and beauty of language in poetry provide researchers with tools to examine nuanced meanings and symbols, shedding light on societal and environmental challenges (Riffaterre, 1978).

Environmental issues have gained increasing prominence in society, prompting efforts to address sustainability concerns and promote ecological literacy. The introduction of ecologically

themed literary works aims to enhance public understanding and awareness of the environment, starting from educational institutions (Febrianti, Priyadi, & Wartiningsih, 2023). Literature related to the environment can be comprehensively studied through literary ecology, which explores the interconnectedness of ecological actions and reactions within complex ecosystem situations (Berliana, Suwandi, & Sumawarti, 2022).

This research delves into the profound ecological themes woven throughout Saras Dewi's verses in *Kekasih Teluk*, inviting readers to contemplate the beauty, fragility, and interconnectedness of the environment. Through the lens of ecological criticism, the study examines how Dewi's imagery and symbolism critique environmental exploitation, lament ecological degradation, and advocate for a more harmonious coexistence with nature. By acknowledging Dewi's creative contribution and offering critical insights into the ecological dimensions of her poetry, this analysis underscores the power of literature to inspire environmental awareness and action, fostering a deeper understanding of the intricate interplay between culture and the environment.

Literary Review

Literary Studies from an Ecological Perspective

Ecocriticism, a branch of literary theory and criticism, extends its purview beyond the confines of literature to engage with broader ecological concerns. Originating from the fusion of "ecology" and "criticism," ecocriticism emerges as a nuanced exploration of the intersections between literature and environmental consciousness (Endraswara, 2016). This interdisciplinary approach is further elucidated by Glotfelty and Fromm (1996), who define ecocriticism as the study of the intricate relationship between literature and the physical environment. Such a definition underscores the profound simplicity of ecocriticism: it is an endeavor to unravel the manifold connections and implications embedded within the textual representations of nature and human-environmental interactions.

Delving deeper into the theoretical underpinnings of ecocriticism, Sukmawan (2016), drawing on Kerridge's insights, underscores its primary objective of tracing the conceptualization and depiction of environmental themes within literary works. This endeavor is rooted in historical environmental concerns and a collective awareness of the imperative to address the sustainability challenges facing our planet. Moreover, ecocriticism stands as a critique of preceding postmodern critical frameworks, signaling its departure from conventional modes of literary analysis and its commitment to foregrounding ecological perspectives within scholarly discourse (Love, 2003).

Within the realm of literary studies, the incorporation of environmental themes introduces a novel dimension that enriches our understanding of human-nature relationships. Garrard (2004) emphasizes the distinctive position of ecocriticism among contemporary literary theories owing to its close alignment with ecological science. This alignment not only underscores the interdisciplinary nature of ecocritical inquiry but also underscores its capacity to bridge disciplinary divides and foster a holistic understanding of environmental issues.

Endraswara (2016) further expands on the multifaceted approach of ecocriticism, proposing that it encompasses an exploration of various attitudes and values towards nature within literary texts. These include attitudes of respect, responsibility, solidarity, compassion, and non-interference with the natural world. Such a comprehensive framework enables scholars to unravel the nuanced portrayals of environmental ethics and ideologies embedded within literary works.

Echoing Garrard's sentiments, as cited in Endraswara (2016), ecocriticism remains steadfast in its focus on interrogating how human-environment relationships are conceptualized and represented culturally. Garrard's delineation of ecocritical themes, ranging from pollution and wilderness to dwelling and animals, underscores the diverse array of ecological concerns that permeate literary discourse. Through this thematic exploration, ecocriticism continues to assert its relevance as a vital lens through which to examine the intricate interplay between literature, culture, and the environment.

In sum, ecocriticism emerges as a dynamic and multifaceted field that not only illuminates the ecological dimensions of literature but also underscores the profound interconnections between human culture and the natural world. Through its interdisciplinary approach and thematic explorations, ecocriticism offers invaluable insights into the ways in which literature both reflects and

shapes our understanding of environmental issues, thereby paving the way for informed dialogue and action towards a more sustainable future.

Human and Nature Representation

Saras Dewi's poetry anthology, *Kekasih Teluk*, provides a rich tapestry of themes exploring the intricate relationship between humanity and the natural world. Through her verses, Dewi offers a profound exploration of the interconnectedness of human existence with the environment, inviting readers to contemplate the beauty, fragility, and symbiosis inherent in this relationship.

One of the central themes in Dewi's poetry is the portrayal of nature as a sentient entity, capable of both nurturing and reflecting the human experience. As Berliana, Suwandi, and Sumarwati (2022) observe, Dewi's verses often anthropomorphize nature, imbuing it with emotions and agency that mirror the complexities of human relationships. Through this anthropomorphic lens, Dewi highlights the reciprocal nature of the bond between humans and the environment, emphasizing the profound impact of human actions on the natural world.

Furthermore, Dewi's poetry delves into the theme of ecological consciousness, urging readers to reconsider their role as stewards of the planet. Febrianti, Priyadi, and Wartiningsih (2023) note that *Kekasih Teluk* serves as a call to action, advocating for a more harmonious coexistence with nature and a heightened awareness of environmental issues. Through her evocative imagery and symbolism, Dewi challenges readers to confront the consequences of environmental degradation and to strive towards sustainability.

Moreover, Dewi's exploration of human-nature relationships in *Kekasih Teluk* intersects with the principles of ecofeminism, as highlighted by Rahmatia, Rimasi, and Lering (2023). The anthology portrays nature as a symbol of feminine strength and resilience, drawing parallels between the exploitation of the environment and the marginalization of women in society. Through her poetry, Dewi underscores the interconnectedness of gender and environmental justice, advocating for the empowerment of both women and the natural world.

Overall, Saras Dewi's *Kekasih Teluk* offers a nuanced representation of human-nature relationships, weaving together themes of interconnectedness, ecological consciousness, and gender equality. Through her evocative verses, Dewi challenges readers to reconsider their perceptions of the environment and their place within it, ultimately advocating for a more sustainable and equitable future.

Research Method

The qualitative research employed in this study utilizes the hermeneutic method, a robust approach for interpreting texts. As elucidated by Molleong (2006), qualitative research endeavors to delve deeply into the phenomena experienced by research subjects, encompassing their behaviors, perceptions, actions, and more, within natural contexts. Despite the utilization of various natural methods, the essence of qualitative research remains rooted in maintaining the authenticity and integrity of the research process. Consequently, the findings derived from qualitative research retain the inherent naturalness of the research itself, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under investigation.

Hermeneutics, as a method for interpreting texts, offers a means to understand literature by elucidating acceptable meanings that may not be immediately apparent to a broad audience (Palmer, 2005). The interpretive process seeks to illuminate and elucidate ambiguities within texts, thereby enhancing clarity and comprehension. According to Ratna (2010), interpretation comprises several stages, including reduction, deciphering, and transformation of form. Notably, the process of interpretation is dynamic, with the act of deciphering and understanding the text unfolding concurrently. Consequently, the resultant interpretation strives to neither diminish nor augment the inherent meaning of the text but rather to unveil and elucidate its latent complexities.

The examination of ecological themes within the poetry anthology *Kekasih Teluk* by Saras Dewi illuminates the poet's profound engagement with environmental concerns. Through her verses, Dewi portrays the delicate balance between humanity and the natural world, inviting readers to contemplate the interconnectedness of all living beings. The anthology serves as a poignant reflection on the

consequences of human actions on the environment, urging a reevaluation of our relationship with the Earth. By delving into Dewi's exploration of ecological issues such as deforestation, pollution, and biodiversity loss, this study sheds light on the power of literature to inspire environmental awareness and advocacy. Through a careful analysis of Dewi's poetic imagery and symbolism, this research aims to deepen our understanding of the intricate ecological narratives woven throughout *Kekasih Teluk*, offering insights into the poet's call for environmental stewardship and sustainable living.

Discussion

In Saras Dewi, anthology poem, *Kekasih Teluk*, the dominant aspect that emerges is the profound relationship between nature and humanity. This relationship is depicted with a predominantly positive tone, highlighting the significant influence of human behavior on the condition of the environment. Saras Dewi intricately portrays the relationship between nature and humanity in the anthology, presenting them as two entities deeply intertwined in love. However, it is unfortunate that there are numerous obstacles they must overcome to unite their love. The depiction of their relationship unfolds gradually across various poems, starting from simple human perceptions of nature and progressing to deeper sentiments.

The data presented to represent the description of findings from the total dataset pertaining to toponymic relationships amounts to 3 instances. The first instance is found in the opening poem of the anthology titled *Kekasih Teluk*. This poem channels a sense of magic and spirituality, directing towards a harmonious relationship between nature and humanity. The relationship between nature and humanity is depicted in the following excerpt from the poem:

*Agamaku tidak diciptakan tuhan
Atau para dewata
Ia dinyanyikan oleh lumba-lumba yang senyumnya mengajarkanku,
Kebebasan. (KT, 2022: 01).*

The data above describes the role of nature as an intermediary for humans to understand religion. "Pengalaman nyata" (real experiences) related to nature or living beings such as animals will provide an understanding that behind it all, there is a figure who plays a role in creating and governing it. This figure is none other than God, integrated into religious teachings. God created the universe and various accompanying events, then asked humans to pay deep attention to it. One of the goals is for humans to learn important lessons about God's existence to regulate real life. "Puisi Agamaku" (My Religion Poem) tells the audience that religion can be known to humans through pure events. As expressed in the last two lines of the second stanza, where humans can understand religion through dolphins. Dolphins are portrayed as spiritual teachers through their smiles representing freedom. The dolphin's smile is often used as a metaphor for the freedom of living beings. In this poem, the poet takes broader spiritual lessons and knowledge through the animal. In another sense, the dolphin's smile in this poem becomes a symbol of true freedom in spiritual matters and represents the truth of religious teachings.

In the last stanza of this poem, it is revealed that religious teachings are also evident in the lines of giant tree trunks, whispers of the evening breeze, and the murmuring of rivers. All three become symbols of spiritual power and the presence of God inherent in the elements of nature. In these lines, it can be interpreted that the true purpose of human religion will easily find the manifestation of heaven in the world. The poem depicts the initial journey of human efforts to get closer to nature. Furthermore, Saras Dewi describes the relationship between humans and nature as becoming even more intimate. Nature is personified, so it seems to have a relationship as a lover with humans. In the poem titled "Cinta Pertama" (First Love), there is a line "Kau lambung inspirasiku" (You are the source of my inspiration), which if interpreted, the bay since then has been a source of inspiration for humans. A feeling of pride emerges because in the poem, it is depicted as something highly praised in the scriptures. Even with this pride, humans consider the bay as the "owner of perfection".

*Engkaulah cinta pertamaku,
Sempat lama kusangkal
Hingga waktu menyadarkan*

*Mengapa kau tak tergantikan
Sebab engkau adalah aku
Aku adalah engkau (KT, 2022: 86)*

In the third stanza of the poem, Saras Dewi masterfully navigates the complexities of human perception and emotional evolution within the context of the relationship between humanity and the bay. Here, she artfully depicts the initial denial of human feelings of love towards the bay, a denial rooted in the perception of the bay as something ordinary or mundane. This portrayal reflects a common tendency among humans to overlook the profound beauty and significance of the natural world, often relegating it to the periphery of their consciousness in favor of more immediate concerns. The denial of love towards the bay underscores a fundamental disconnect between humans and the environment, one characterized by indifference or indifference born out of ignorance. In this state of denial, humans fail to recognize the inherent worth and depth of the bay's existence, viewing it through a lens of superficiality or utilitarianism rather than appreciating it for its intrinsic value. However, Saras Dewi's narrative takes a pivotal turn as she introduces an event that serves as a catalyst for the transformation of human perception. This event, left unspecified in the poem but implied through its impact on the human psyche, disrupts the status quo and challenges the prevailing notion of the bay as merely a backdrop or resource to be exploited.

Through this transformative event, humans come to realize the true depth of their connection with the bay, transcending the limitations of perception and recognizing the inherent unity between themselves and the natural world. The realization that "Sebab engkau adalah aku, Aku adalah engkau" (For you are me, I am you) encapsulates this profound shift in consciousness, acknowledging the essential oneness of humanity and the bay.

Overall, Saras Dewi's portrayal of the denial and subsequent recognition of love towards the bay speaks to the transformative power of human consciousness and the capacity for individuals to transcend their limited perspectives. It serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of cultivating awareness and empathy towards the natural world, recognizing that our relationship with the environment is not one of mere utility or exploitation but of profound interconnectedness and mutual belonging.

In "Percumbuan dengan Teluk" (Union with the Bay), Saras Dewi delves into the intricacies of the relationship between humans and nature, particularly focusing on the bay, portraying it not merely as a passive backdrop but as an active participant in a deeply intimate connection. Unlike conventional expressions of love between humans, where physical gestures like hugging and kissing are prominent, the bond between humans and the bay transcends the physical realm and delves into a profound exchange of strength and understanding.

In the first stanza, the bay is personified as capable of bestowing a "first kiss" upon humans, evoking imagery of tender intimacy. However, this kiss goes beyond a mere physical act; it symbolizes a moment of introspection where humans contemplate their own essence, drawing inspiration from the bay's intrinsic qualities. This suggests that the relationship between humans and the bay is not one-sided but reciprocal, with each party enriching the other through mutual understanding and reflection. The second stanza further explores this deepening connection by illustrating how humans absorb the bay's strength through acts of "making love" and "caressing." Here, Saras Dewi emphasizes the importance of closeness and intimacy in fostering a profound bond with nature. By getting closer to the bay and understanding its nuances more deeply, humans are able to tap into its inherent vitality and wisdom, enhancing their own sense of connection and belonging within the natural world.

Through these poetic depictions, Saras Dewi challenges conventional notions of love and intimacy, inviting readers to reconsider the ways in which humans relate to and interact with the environment. The portrayal of the bay as a beloved partner highlights the depth and complexity of the relationship between humanity and nature, suggesting that true union occurs not through grand gestures but through a deep-seated understanding and appreciation of each other's essence.

This exploration of the peak of love between humans and the bay serves as a poignant reminder of the profound interconnectedness that exists between all living beings and the natural

world. It encourages a shift away from anthropocentric perspectives towards a more holistic understanding of our place within the ecosystem, where mutual respect, reciprocity, and reverence for nature form the foundation of our relationship with the environment.

Kiamat mungil terjadi di dalam tubuhku

Ia meloloskanku dari cengkraman samsara

Seluruhnya terhisap ke dalam mulut Teluk (KT, 2022: 59)

In the final stanza of the poem, the imagery of a "miniature doomsday" occurring within the speaker encapsulates the profound impact of the pinnacle of love shared between humanity and the bay. This cataclysmic metaphor suggests a transformative moment where the boundaries between the human self and the natural world blur, resulting in a profound shift within the speaker's being. The intensity of their connection with the bay implies a reciprocal exchange of strength and vitality, indicating that nature not only receives but also imbues the human spirit with its own essence. The depiction of the peak of love as a merging of human and natural elements evokes a sense of intimacy and unity, suggesting that when individuals are able to integrate themselves fully with the environment, a sacred communion is forged. This union signifies more than just a harmonious coexistence; it represents a deeper, more transcendent connection where the boundaries between self and nature dissolve, and a profound sense of reverence and awe emerges. Furthermore, the notion that this merging gives rise to a sacred feeling underscores the spiritual significance of the relationship between humanity and the natural world. It implies that by embracing and immersing themselves in nature, humans can tap into a higher state of consciousness, where the mundane distinctions between the self and the environment fade away, and a profound sense of interconnectedness prevails.

Ultimately, the bond between humans and nature depicted in the poem transcends mere physical proximity; it is a bond that exists on a spiritual level, one that is felt deeply within the soul rather than observed superficially. It speaks to the profound power of nature to nourish, inspire, and transform the human spirit, and suggests that through this intimate connection, individuals can attain a deeper understanding of themselves and their place in the world.

Conclusion

In *Kekasih Teluk*, the anthology poem by Saras Dewi, the intricate portrayal of the relationship between nature and humanity emerges as a dominant theme. This relationship is depicted with a predominantly positive tone, emphasizing the significant influence of human behavior on the environment's condition. Through Saras Dewi's verses, we witness a journey from simple human perceptions of nature to deeper emotional connections, illustrating the evolving bond between humanity and the natural world. The analysis of specific instances within the poem reveals a profound intertwining of spirituality, love, and environmental consciousness. Nature is presented not only as a backdrop but as an active participant in the human experience, serving as a conduit for spiritual understanding and emotional fulfillment. The imagery of dolphins, giant tree trunks, evening breezes, and murmuring rivers all symbolize the presence of divinity within the natural world, inviting humans to recognize and connect with the sacredness inherent in their surroundings. At the peak of the relationship between humanity and the bay, Saras Dewi employs powerful metaphors, such as the "miniature doomsday," to convey the transformative impact of their union. This moment of profound intimacy blurs the boundaries between the human self and the natural world, leading to a sacred communion where humans absorb the strength and vitality of the bay while also imbuing it with their own essence. The merging of human and natural elements evokes a sense of unity and interconnectedness, highlighting the potential for a deeper understanding of both self and environment. Through this intimate connection, Saras Dewi suggests that humans can tap into a higher state of consciousness, transcending the superficial distinctions between themselves and nature to embrace a profound sense of reverence and awe.

Overall, *Kekasih Teluk* offers a poignant exploration of the bond between humanity and nature, emphasizing its spiritual depth and transformative power. Future research could delve deeper into the psychological and cultural implications of such relationships, exploring how they shape individual and collective identities, as well as influencing attitudes and behaviors towards environmental

stewardship. Additionally, comparative studies across different cultural and geographical contexts could provide valuable insights into the universality of these themes and their potential for fostering greater ecological awareness and appreciation.

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