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Literature and Nature: The Erasure of Dualism

ABSTRACT: *The depiction of women's subjugation and subordination of women is prevalence and feminist critics determines to dismantle the ideology of patriarchal dominance to create awareness about the positioning and rules of women in society. This paper intends to explore the author's depiction of nature associated with the formation of women's self. Karen Warren (1997) indicates that trees, water, animal, toxics, and nature language are feminist issues because understanding them helps one understand the status and plight of women cross-culturally. The depiction of natural environment and the position of women will be explored in detail to understand and criticizes author's perception toward nature and woman. The author's uses of domestic animal like a bird and a cat to symbolize the women's need for companionship but this also connotes to women dependency. Women's uses of natural flower and faunas as women's fragrance are significance and the author acknowledges women's knowledge of natural products that are available around the house. The paper also explores the metaphors that are associated the portrayal of the unattended local trees that surrounding the neglected "Rumah Limas potongan Perak" house which relates the image of Sangeetha's physical being. Using Taiping in Perak, Malaysia as the setting, the author's depiction of the natural floral and faunas is densely coalesced with the preservation of natural heritage that reflects the author's attitude toward nature and environment. Finally, this paper explores in detail the reciprocal relationship between literature and nature by examining natural heritages elements related to the northern region of peninsular Malaysia that uniquely illustrated through the novel.*

KEY WORD: *Subordination, ecofeminist, companionship, patriarchal, and environment.*

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INTRODUCTION

From the past decade, Malaysia went through rapid and massive infrastructure development, in terms of government's effort to improve its economic structure. One example to expedite economic recovery is to promote foreign investors to Malaysia. To accommodate these quests, lots of efforts have been made to prepare for foreign accommodation and social infrastructure to make living in Malaysia becomes as compatible as other places such as Singapore, Thailand, and Philippines.

One effort to attract them is to offer high standard home lifestyles that are equipped with high security surveillances. This high standard lifestyle requires recent hillsides housing development that disturbs the natural ecosystem and rain forest destructions. Massive offshore fishery has been sacrificed to prepare for the sophisticated high standard living near the seafront that promotes to the imaginary living on a beautiful paradise. Lots of natural deforestation and the illegal logging of the hill takes place to provide extra soil to solidify the reclaimed land. As a result, small hills disappear and the initial natural beauty fades away to be sacrificed for the shake economic development. This real scenario seems common in Malaysia setting that those efforts for sustainability does not applicable for the housing developments. Is the same scenario appearing in literary works?

ECOFEMINISM

Ecofeminism provides the groundings necessary to reevaluate the positioning of women and nature and its interconnection. This critical reading studies the environment in its inter-relationship. Ecofeminist examines natural change and conservation by recognizing humanity as part of the planetary ecosystem. Patrick Murphy (1995:20) defines ecofeminism as "*a study of interrelationship, place, and function with its bedrock the recognition of the distinction between things-in-themselves and things-for-us*". The interrelationship, Patrick Murphy suggests, refers to readers' ability to understand the function of natural elements and its connection to the well-being of human existence. This interrelationship advocates co-existence of human and non-human entity (Murphy, 1995).

In this sense, we see how the relationship evolves through the representation of woman, culture, and nature. In symbolic way, ecofeminism approach will analysis every women author towards the elements of flora and fauna, landscape, and wilderness which can be find

in the texts. Two methods which can be identified are: (1) point of view towards men from the aspect of “green agenda”; and (2) the used of flora and flora, landscape, and wilderness to reflect at representative of the emotion of women author in the text.

In examining human’s interrelationship between place, function, and the position of women and nature, this paper highlights the author’s conceptualization of presenting woman and nature. Elizabeth Dodd proposes “*ecofeminism offers a form of corrective didacticism, where the masculinist anti-ecological model is examined and then rejected for a different paradigm*” (cited by Warren ed., 1997). While Elizabeth Dodd proposes the notion of patriarchal anti-ecological stance, this essay explores diversified manifestations of patriarchal exploration of nature and environmental issues. These differences derive from the way culture and social milieu of Malay setting but intermix with Indian and Hinduism belief as well that determines what nature is and its interrelation with woman.

Let us first discuss Azizi Haji Abdullah’s works (2006) and then examines how they may illuminate the dialogue on ecofeminism in terms of the task of male practices and the concept of ecological multi-cultural.

THE AUTHOR AND THE NOVEL

This paper examines the representation of nature and woman being portrayed by Azizi Haji Abdullah (2006), a Malay contemporary writer, who uses the elements of nature and its natural heritage of the northern setting in relation to woman’s subjectivity and experiences. The ecofeminist reading takes the author’s awareness, attitude, and perception toward the act of preserving natural heritage and to avoid nature destruction. Compared to real life social phenomena, the natural has to be renounced to replace advancement in economic development; the literary text conveys different essentialism. From the reading, it could be concluded that the author’s views and mind toward nature are densely metaphoric and with its symbolic representation of women experiences that are closely associated with nature.

The novel depicts a correlation bound and relationship between two old individual who come from different race, culture, and faith. But both of them share a deeper appreciation toward musical instrument and communicate their feeling through the beating of *tabla* and *dangga* [Indian musical equipments] and the striking of the *gambus* [Malay/ Arabic musical instruments]. The nature of their relationship is ambiguous [*cinta yang tersirat, yang sukar ditafsir, tetapi mereka berdua menafikan*

kehadiran cinta itu, tetapi juga dalam diam masing-masing menyimpan rasa kasih dan rindu]. They are neither lover nor siblings but their relationship conveys typical scenarios of two old people who are going through similar phases of their life — being old, loneliness, and isolation. Both are without immediate spouses and isolated — Derus remains unmarried and Sangeetha is a widow. The author's conception of gender hierarchy exists and this hierarchy plays dominant roles in shaping the representation of woman self and identity.

THE ANALYSIS

The analysis engages the discussion of ecological multiculturalism as it is neither addressed about ecosystem destructions that patriarchal constructs nor addresses patriarchal oppression that cause women subordinated position, but this analysis theoretically serves to elaborate the arguments that women associations with nature is coalesced. Woman's identity is equated with the representation of nature which in our point of view reflects the harmonious balance but at the same time reveals a complex relationship between human and nature. By addressing how the concept of dichotomy remains integral, the discussion examines thin dividing line separating man and woman as socially constructed. The conclusion will relate to our own suggested paradigm, the one that will seek to discuss, to criticize, and to correct male views' toward woman, nature, and environmental conception.

The representation of women mirrors the ideological formation of author's attitude toward nature and its sustainability. The novel *Sangeetha* by Azizi Haji Abdullah (2006) illustrates the depiction of an older woman's loneliness in her golden age. The discussion relates to the discussion of woman self and their inner struggle which suggests deeper emotional traumas. This paper addresses author's portrayal of relationship among local unattended trees, culture, exploitation, and oppression. This paper conveys the author's subjectivity, attitude, and worldly view toward nature, woman, heritage, and the act of preservation.

The depiction of woman and nature embodies the concepts of woman's positioning and their subjectivity in relation to nature. The representation woman, as the author conveys, connotes to representation of nature as domestic, embedded, and rural. But this finding discovers that nature has been used as a metaphor that marginalizes and subjugated nature similar to what had happened to the representation of *Sangeetha*. Neglected and isolated the natural and faunas are left out to be grown to be a wild and

untamed. *Sangeetha*, the woman protagonist, is described similar to the state and the well being of the natural floral and faunas in her garden to ensure natural surrounding are preserved. It is also applicable to the protagonist's relationship with each other that she suffers neglect. It is evidence that the women protagonist is portrayed through patriarchal zoom and positions her as a secondary position. She is isolated and abandoned. She is not empowered.

The other negative representation of *Sangeetha's* subjectivity and positioning that reflects the metaphor of *Sangeetha's* life. While on the other hand, it could have be seen that a representation of living in harmony with natural flora and faunas but these natural metaphor reflects the unattended *Sangeetha's* life without husband, family, and children. Through the depiction of flora and faunas, *Sangeetha's* life manifests and describes her life that is disorganized, lacks order, messy, and lacks companionship.

This depictions conveys powerful imagery — the metaphor that stands for something deeper and metaphoric. The author is very successful to use nature as metaphor to discuss *Sangeetha's* life. She was unattended, unloved, and without companion — this is associated with her physical appearance that is frail, wild, and old — these connotes to disorder. In terms of ideological values, the tree can be seen as part of nature – unattended local flora that lacks tended care. The symbols of women's life in this novel is secondary as *Sangeetha* has been depicted as marginalized, ignored, and being equated with the author's portrayal of nature symbolically refers to *Sangeetha's* position and subjectivity.

It is undoubtedly valid to claim that nature is associated and blended and becomes parts of human activities. The expressions of ecological concerns imply the connection that human existence and natural floral and faunas co-exists side by side. Thus, the depiction of local trees surrounding the setting highlights the interconnection that exists between human and non-human entity. The analysis of the flora and faunas demonstrates stronger emphasis on the endless referral to human-nature interaction, relationship, and inter-dependence. The author establishes the balance of ecosystem between human and non-human through its interdependence with each other.

This paper argues how ecofeminism framework constructs and informs the connections and continuity of human and non-human entity. It is important to note that women's relationship with nature is inseparable. Azizi Haji Abdullah's novel (2006) features nature as equivalent to a woman. The author describes the man's act of sustainability and maintaining

ecological equilibrium which represents the opposite to ecofeminist claims that patriarchy causes ecological destructions. As presented in this novel, Azizi Haji Abdullah illustrates the depiction of the *Mother Nature's* contribution, which offers healing power to human. *“Satu yang orang hairan, mata Derus masih sihat (70 tahun). Apabila orang minta petua, katanya selalulah pandang warna hijau, sebab itulah belakang rumahnya tidak ditebang pokok semak samun”* (Azizi Haji Abdullah, 2006:43).

This excerpt conveys the healing power that nature possesses. Without clearing the surrounding bushes and small trees nearby, the greenish color, that nature associated with, has been described to have healing power to cure unhealthy eyes. It offers a good remedy to maintain perfect eyesight. The fact about Derus' healthy eyesight without glasses is associated with Derus's habitual routines to observe the green nature as a healing power. This daily habit exemplifies the need to maintain and to depend on natural surroundings.

By emphasizing the therapeutic healing power nature offers, the author opts for natural conservation. Different from Western conception of dualism, the author illustrates a meeting point where human and nature can depend on each other. Being considered as a natural remedy to maintain perfect eyesight, man turns back to nature to heal. The male protagonist describes nature's healing power as way of living, by turning back to nature Derus rejects modern industrial technology remedy which offers better and quicker solution. The notion of turning backward to nature is unique but remote. Azizi Haji Abdullah (2006) might have seen the necessity of changing “his” way of healing by recognizing its power to heal human eyesight. Azizi Haji Abdullah (2006) explains that greenish brush and bushes serve as a therapeutic remedy that human eyes wish for.

Sustainability and turning back to nature as a lifestyle connotes to author's close admiration toward nature in this novel. Through ecofeminist reading lenses, the reader recognizes the author's rural association which is totally opposite from modern, hustle and bustle, and routine city life. *“Tetapi Derus senang dengan keadaan sekeliling. Tenang. Tak bising. Pagi-pagi ada kicauan burung dari belukar dan pokok-pokok pisang, buluh, pokok kekabu, pokok bintangur, dan pokok asam jawa”* (Azizi Haji Abdullah, 2006:42).

The ecosystem that Azizi Haji Abdullah conveys in this excerpt consists of non-human entity which creates balance and suggests tranquility. The chirping of the birds suggests different location itself. The local trees have been presented to be another ecosystem where natural creatures create balance and co-existence with human. The character acknowledges the

presence of the bird, the sound that the bird produces and the existence of “*pokok-pokok pisang, buluh, pokok kekabu, pokok bintangur, dan pokok asam jawa*” completes the bird’s ecosystems as the setting. This ecological awareness suggests man’s high respects toward nature. Derus’ attitude toward nature is further exemplified when his experiences appreciating the tranquility brings calmness. And these scenes of accepting nature originate from his appreciation and respect toward natural surroundings. It is the natural landscape which is filled with local trees that offer serenity and calmness. Thus, this interconnection and its interrelationship signify man’s calls for the conservation of nature and to maintain its local heritage which is not connected with materialistic world views.

Man’s act to preserve nature instead of destroying them is apparent in the following excerpt. Nature has been treated with respect.

Pada masa Viralal hidup dulu, kalau dia datang memunggut sewa, pokok jejawi itu macam pokok tuhannya. Macam di situ tuhannya bertenggek. Dia pernah memesan pada Derus jangan tebang, jangan ganggu. Itu pokok Tuhan, katanya (Azizi Haji Abdullah, 2006:41).

Spiritually permeated — the author illustrates nature symbolically as gods. The excerpt indicates human’s reverence toward nature. The strong urges at the end of this excerpt conveys the message that regards nature part of the ecological system. Instead of chopping down the tree to develop houses and agricultural activities, the narrator specifically requests to avoid nature destructions. The man has been presented to be not material/money oriented and deems to consider the tree as one’s god. This perspective conveys strong association toward the existence of nature itself which is devoid of material existence.

Similar to what Patrick Murphy (1995:11) suggests that an ecofeminism use of Bakhtin’s dialogic which locates the marginalized subject to the center. Nature no longer appears to be a separate entity apart from man and another entity to be exploited. Individually, Azizi Haji Abdullah (2006) suggests man’s admiration toward nature and its presence. Both nature and human co-exist to support each other. The symbolic representation of nature as god suggests the notion of equality between human and non-human entity. The worship attitude toward nature is reflected through its symbolic association. Such depiction derives from religious practices that teach human to treat nature with respects.

WOMEN, ENVIRONMENT, AND ECOFEMINISM

The concept of ecological awareness and natural balance encapsulate a number of ecofeminist's concern about nature and its preservation. The representation of nature connotes to author's concern about the hegemonic environmental discourses. Gretchen T. Legler indicates as follows:

Ecofeminist literary criticism is a hybrid combination that incorporates ecological and feminist literary criticism and philosophical viewpoints, thereby providing a theoretical vantage point which enables literary and cultural critics to investigate how nature is portrayed in literature and the ways embodiments of nature are metaphorically and conceptually linked with representation of gender, race, class, and sexuality (cited by Warren ed., 1997:227).

The analysis above suggests that the embodiments of nature that are uniquely presented and it is metaphorically presented to be associated with human. The following discussion conceptualizes how the embodiments of nature that are conceptually linked with the representation of gender, class, and sexuality as Gretchen T. Legler proposes. In this context, Patrick Murphy (1995:98) advocates that *“ecofeminist works to challenge dominant ideology of dualism and hierarchy within Western culture that construct nature as separate from and inferior to human nature”*.

The following discussion addresses how social construction of gender plays roles in shaping the position of women and women identity. Patrick Murphy concepts of ecofeminist critics, the analysis continues to examine how the author addresses the dominant ideology of dualism and hierarchy in Malay cultures. While the concepts of dualism and hierarchy are more prevalence and pervasive in Western culture, this essay examine if similar influence exists in Malaysian setting, specifically in reference to the positioning of women in the northern region part of Malaysia.

The practice of ecofeminist aims to examine the coalesced cultural conception of human identity and human relationship with non-human entity. Ecofeminism theory questions the conceptualization of dualism and hierarchy by insisting essentialist connection between women and nature. Ecofeminism opposes women and nature to be considered as part of male-dominated culture in the rigidly dualistic fashion. In examining how the dualistic notion has been conceptualized in this novel, the discussion leads to identify woman's connection to ecological and gender issues. This analysis does not address the question how to resolve the ecological destruction which revolving around the nature and its connection to culture. What we consider as the most striking issues about dualism

concept in reading Azizi Haji Abdullah's novel (2006) is the subjectivity of woman identity in relation to gender hierarchy.

Similar to the position of nature, woman is presented to be inferior and being described to be closer to nature compared to man. One of the feminist aims is to end women's subjugation and oppression. The author depicts woman is similar to nature that the depiction of nature which is closely associated with the formation of women self. Karen Warren, as editor, in her book *Ecofeminist: Women, Culture, and Nature* (1997) indicates that "trees, water, animal, toxics and nature language are feminist issues because understanding them helps one understand the status and plight of women cross-culturally" (Warren ed., 1997:4).

Karen Warren calls for different way of looking at woman and its relationship to natural non-human entity. This principle brings awareness to the links that relate women to nature (Warren ed., 1997). One example presented is in the use of domesticated animal such as a bird and a cat. Woman's association with these animals symbolizes women-co-dependency that can be interpreted as a woman's prerequisite requirement to be accompanied. Such representation connotes to a woman's necessity for companionship which is viewed as a part of social expectation for women to be accompanied either by siblings, spouses or family members. The following excerpt supports women's requirement to be accompanied:

Dalam keadaan hanyut olak alun kemabukan sunyi, di luar pintu terdengar Meo mengiau-ngiau dan terdengar Meo mencakar-cakar daun pintu minta dibuka. Patutlah tadi Meo tidak kelihatan, Meo tidur di bawah ampai bajunya. Rupa-rupanya Meo keluar. Dan apabila Meo mengiau dia toha kali lagi, dia pun bangun dengan sangat hati-hati. [...] Meo melompat cergas dan menyelit-nyelit di kakinya, mengodek-ngodek ekornya. Maka merbok disangkar itu pun berwak-wak, beraww-aww dua tiga kali kerana hairan tuannya membuka pintu tanpa kedatangan seseorang (Azizi Haji Abdullah, 2006:254).

It is apparent from the excerpt that *Sangeetha's* identity is conditioned by the presence of the cat and the bird. With minimal human interaction, the cat has been treated as part of the family members. "Meo" — the cat is not being treated like an animal but rather as another person in the house; the cat's presence is predictable and the cat natural behaviors has been identified as recognizable connotation. The cat's active movement relates to the Derus's presence and the cat's spontaneous reactions to *Sangeetha* suggest deeper relationship rather than being a pet. It has been suggested that both the cat and "burung merbuk" are a close companion to *Sangeetha*. Their relationship transcends beyond the difference between

human and non-human entity. In fact, these animals have been treated with tenderness, love, and care.

We discover that it is *Sangeetha's* loneliness has been magnified in this novel and only the cat and the bird understand *Sangeetha's* intuitions. This interaction suggests deeper connection. Being depicted to be connected through the animal habits, *Sangeetha* communicates with the animal as if they understood her loneliness and world-weariness predicament that she experiences through. Her emotion and feeling of loneliness and isolation are more affected rather than the loneliness that Derus experiences.

This is further evidenced because *Sangeetha's* reaction toward the cat and the bird symbolically reflects her current emotional states, that is being isolated. Without other human interaction, the presence of the cat — “Meo” and “burung merbok” complements part of her identity and existence. Symbolically, the representation of the bird and the cat resembles woman's delicate manner and being considered as man-best companions. These interrelationships between human and non-human entity here is presented to be a deeper affiliation which supports each other.

Tiba-tiba merbuk di dalam sangkar yang tergantung di bucu alang semurup pisang sesikat meratus semula. Sangeetha terdengar keriuat pintu pagar besi yang engselnya sudah berkarat, kerana bukaannya sangat cermat dan pelan-pelan. Dan tiba-tiba pula Meo yang entah dari mana menyelit-nyelit kakinya [...] Merbok pun bertekuku galak. Maratus rajin. Kemudian dia duduk pelan-pelan seperti pengantin baru dengan sopan menyambut suami. Di jantai kakinya ke undakan. Memang Deruslah itu (Azizi Haji Abdullah, 2006:283).

The sound, the movement, and the direct reaction of the animal are associated with human's presence. This suggests that all these animals are not being treated as secondary beings but more or less being treated as part of the family members. The bird welcomes Derus, who visits *Sangeetha* occasionally, as if to greeting another family member to the house by producing a welcoming ritual to greet the visitor. Azizi Haji Abdullah (2006) illustrates different level of relationship in this sense.

Sangeetha's identity is not completed without her association and her interactions with the animals. Therefore, *Sangeetha's* identity is equivalent to non-human being. *Sangeetha*, Meo, and “burung merbok” emerge to exist as one identity which support and complement each other. This is evidence when Derus comes to the house to take care of several different things. *Sangeetha's* presence symbolically reflects Derus' responsibility to take care of the surrounding, the maintenance of the house, to warm up the old Morris Minor automobile, and to take *Sangeetha* to the market.

Derus' commitment to clean the bird's cage and replacing bird's feeder indicates the need for the bird to be attended. *Sangeetha's* identity is a collective being. It is accompanied with non human entity. Meo — the cat's presence and interactions are part of *Sangeetha's* routines. Meo could have replaced the children that *Sangeetha* never have. This interrelation is unique and complex as it symbolically represents the unity with nature.

The concept of gender hierarchy as feminist theory identifies advance ecofeminist argument about dichotomy and dualism concepts that eventually results to male dominance. We believe that Azizi Haji Abdullah (2006) would exercise "*mythical male dominance in its social functioning*" in which real male dominance evolves. The male dominance is evidenced in the representation of gender hierarchy in Azizi Haji Abdullah's novel (2006). It is *Sangeetha* who holds higher social standing and social status in terms of wealth and money compared to Derus, but Derus's male dominance is inevitable. Derus regulates his presence at *Sangeetha's* "*Rumah Limas potongan Perak*" as he wishes without being obliged to a rigid schedule that explains his unregulated working schedule.

In fact, Azizi Haji Abdullah (2006) seems to convey women's dependency toward man continues to be highlighted in this novel. *Sangeetha's* identity as a widow to a rich merchant does not uplift her social positioning. In fact, her dependence upon Derus suggests the essence of male dominance in their relationship. "*Aku tak takut mati, Derus. Yang aku takut ialah kelohongan sebuah kehidupan pikun, sepi, dan sunyi tiada berteman. Kiranya aku berasa sebuah penderitaan kini, penderitaan itu tidak lain daripada kekosongan yang engkau tinggalkan*" (Azizi Haji Abdullah, 2006:483).

Sangeetha laments that it is being alone and its isolation that *Sangeetha* is afraid to confront. Symbolically, woman living alone in a patriarchal society raises societal concern regarding her well about and well beings, especially *Sangeetha's* senior age requires her dependency towards others. Therefore, *Sangeetha's* living alone causes Derus' worry as who will be responsible for her well being. This indicates that *Sangeetha's* survival alone in the society is not absolute without Derus' concern. *Sangeetha* is isolated from the society because her social class minimizes her interaction with the outsiders. "*Tidak! Tidak, Derus. Aku ini bukan seperti itu. Aku telah sekian lama terpaut dengan kejujuranmu, ketaatanmu, dan penghargaanmu terhadap kepikunanku*" (Azizi Haji Abdullah, 2006:483).

Sangeetha's feeling toward Derus connotes stronger bond and relationship. But it is only *Sangeetha's* heartfelt mourns that are heard throughout the novel. *Sangeetha* hopes for Derus's presence in her dream world where both of them are more open about their relationship. But

Azizi Haji Abdullah (2006) depicts *Sangeetha* to be overwhelming emotion as the peak of a woman issue. It seems like *Sangeetha* suffers greater indispensable emotional traumas dealing with her loneliness. There is no doubt that Derus undergoes similar feeling being alone and loneliness but Derus's predicaments is basically been given a masculinity conditioning in dealing with emotion; therefore, *Sangeetha's* pleads remains indifferent. *Sangeetha's* loneliness seems to be misunderstood and unreachable thus results to Derus' attitude to maintain their distances. Being a man, Derus does not appreciate women's language of hopes and love. Derus's detachment results from his inability to understand what *Sangeetha* wants in the relationship perhaps due to his lacks of experience dealing with woman's emotions.

Being considered as emotionally overwhelming with her hope for Derus to understand, her emotional sufferance remains insensible, and oblivious to Derus. It is interesting to note that the readers are fully aware about Derus's feeling toward *Sangeetha* but it was not revealed to her. And *Sangeetha's* reactions as "*Percayakah Derus bahawa hanya kasih sayang kepada engkau sahaja harapan kepikunanku dalam hidup ini*" (Azizi Haji Abdullah, 2006:484) is known to reader but not to Derus.

This suggests that it is only *Sangeetha's* loneliness that supports her inability to be a rational person. Her emotion and hope for Derus's presence reflect woman's weakness. *Sangeetha's* isolation and loneliness have been given greater implication and results to her own health deterioration. *Sangeetha's* too much concerns about feeling and emotions connotes to woman's disadvantages. Waiting appears to be the only routine that *Sangeetha* goes through every day. Our reading directly infers to the author's manipulation of the concept of dualism by presenting the analysis of Western binary opposition. This is evidence when we read about *Sangeetha's* emotional turbulence in comparison to Derus' reaction being a logical and reasonable man who is still presented to be ignorance and out of compassionate feeling and understanding toward *Sangeetha*.

It is interesting to point out that Derus has difficulties to understand woman's need but he is very well verse about taking care of the animal as another non-human entity. This is evidence when Azizi Haji Abdullah (2006) illustrates *Sangeetha's* loneliness reflected through the depiction of the captured bird. One of Derus' obligation coming to the house is to clean the cage, to replace bird's drinking water, and to set-up fresh food supplies.

Memang maksud kedatangannya petang itu bukan kerana pesanan Meena, ketika dia solat sunat duha dan hajat pagi tadi. Bukan [...]. Yang menggerakkan hatinya

hanyalah merbuk, satu-satu burung yang dihadiahkan kepada Viralal dulu, yang kini masih galak meratusnya. Tanpa merbuk bererti tiadalah dia. Murung merbuk bererti nestapalah dia. Maka kerana dia berasa berkewajipan datang merawat merbuk (Azizi Haji Abdullah, 2006:498).

In this excerpt, Derus claims that the bird is part of him; without the bird, there will be no Derus which connotes to spiritual unification as ecofeminism proposes. Even though it is quite ironic to think that man would appreciate nature but keeping the bird captured in a cage that symbolically signifies the imprisonment of bird from its natural habitat.

Sakitkah Sangeetha seperti kemurungan merbuk? Tujuannya datang petang ini bukan kerana Sangeetha, tetapi kerana merbuk [...]. Geetha [...] bisik Derus dengan segala susah payah memeluk sangkar yang dirasanya seperti mencepung Sangeetha yang kurus kecil itu. Memang [...] memang Sangeethalah yang dicempungnya kerana Sangeetha dengan merbuk adalah satu, Sangeetha dengan tabla adalah satu, Sangeetha dengan Meo adalah satu, dan Sangeetha dengannya adalah satu (Azizi Haji Abdullah, 2006:500).

From this excerpt, the critique of spiritual ecofeminism is apparent in the sense that the view that men and women are essentially and an inherently difference in character and nature is inversed. Spiritually, the character emphasizes that they are coalesced under an umbrella of a collective imagery. These spiritually-oriented notions that ecofeminist empower and virtue. Ecofeminist – like Jasmin Sydee and Sharon Beder (2001:218) argue that re-connecting human with nature, and modeling communities and self-actualization on the patterns and webs of nature – has vast political and structural implications, and, in itself, is inherently spiritually.

From this analysis, it is apparent that Azizi Haji Abdullah (2006) dismantles the dualism forms by welcoming the concepts of diversity. The collective identity that the characters identify at the end of the novel symbolically indicates the breaking apart Western conception of dualism by recreating community with a mutual reciprocity. The connection between “*a self in relation to others*” promotes the notion to recognize and value that of the others.

CONCLUSION

Twin domination of woman and nature is symbolically altered. This metaphor apparently reflects author’s attitudes toward environmental awareness which lacks materialism connotation. Women’s association

with nature suggests women's emotion and intuition similar to Mother Nature. This reveals a different consciousness in women than men.

Women's ecological interdependencies can be view as positive realities about Malaysian society. We categorize Azizi Haji Abdullah's views (2006) and attitude by refusing to dismantle the web of dominance and oppression. The female protagonist in this novel is oppressed emotionally and spiritually by dreaming for hopeful future.

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