

Treatment of Nature: An Ecocriticism Approach in ‘Komat Kamit’ of Tejo and Kamba’s *Tuhan Maha Asik*

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Abstract—This research was aimed at reflecting how Sujiwo Tejo and M. N. Kamba treat nature in *Komat Kamit* (murmuring), one of the chapters in their work entitled *Tuhan Maha Asik*. Tejo and Kamba explained clearly how humans have treated the natural environment. This research is considered important and worthwhile as it is an effort to raise human awareness about the importance of protecting and conserving nature. This also shows that a literary work can be a significant medium that also plays an important role in efforts to preserve nature or the environment. This study uses an ecocriticism approach, which is a study of the reflection of the interconnection between humans and nature in literary works. This research also uses descriptive qualitative in which the data obtained from the literary work are analyzed to determine the reciprocal relationship between humans and nature in *Komat-Kamit*, one of the chapters in Tejo and Kamba’s *Tuhan Maha Asik*. The findings of this study indicate that how humans treat nature greatly affects the nature of the environment. *Komat Kamit* or murmuring is reflected as a habit to show human gratitude for nature to God. Such a habit also symbolizes human respect for nature. Human gratitude and respect for nature can result in ecological balance and sustainability. However, *Komat Kamit*, or murmuring implies that the relationship between humans and nature is not just words of praise to nature but must be realized with concrete actions to protect and preserve nature.

Index Terms—natural environment, preserve nature, ecological sustainability, ecocriticism

I. INTRODUCTION

Humans and nature have a very close relationship. Nature or the environment has a large enough influence on human life. Humans and the nature of the environment have a causal relationship. Human behavior has a major impact on the preservation of nature. Nature acts according to human behavior. Unfortunately, many think that nature is the object that always provides benefits to humans. Human behavior changes from time to time as the development of technology grows. The positive and negative impacts mostly affect the generation nowadays (Arafah & Hasyim, 2022). This has resulted in rampant exploitation of nature indiscriminately. As a result, environmental damage can be caused by exploitation. As an example, Indonesia is in an ecological emergency because of environmental damage. It was stated by Walhi (*Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia* or Indonesian Forum for the Environment) at a national environmental conference in Cibubur, on December 13, 2017 (Arianto et al., 2021). This kind of situation endangers the preservation of Indonesia’s heritage as already known that each country utilizes history, natural potential, and cultural heritage of local wisdom that also come from the environment (Hasyim et al., 2020).

The natural environment is now starting to break down a lot. Since the destruction occurred, there is no accurate record that can explain it. Environmental damage which can be seen directly by the community is divided into two parts, namely damage to the environment, around the place of residence and environmental damage, in a place far from

human habitation, for example on certain islands (Lestari, 2018). In response to the environmental issues, people's awareness of the environment has to be urgently encouraged. A technique concerning the education of the natural environment can be employed to meet this need (Andi & Arafah, 2017). The educational system can be a part to fill this need in the shape of learning material that involves the student and the environment (Arafah et al., 2020). To learn about the environment of a certain place, teachers and learners should conduct to explore the valuable contents of each culture in one environment. In the end, the learners are built by how they act, behave, and are based on the environment they grow (Mokoginta & Arafah, 2022). Therefore, in this case, the teacher takes part in giving an explanation and mastering the content about the relation between literature and the environment (Sunardi et al., 2018). People's awareness of the environmental damage concerning literature can be started by introducing it to the young generation who are no longer interested in literary work (Arafah & Hasyim, 2019). The older generation should take a part in explaining human nature to the young generation as it will become their heritage for them in the future.

Literary works become a powerful tool to convey human disappointment towards the occurring environmental damage. The rising number of environmental damage also causes the development of the literary work theory as a response to the author's thoughts that changed as time passed following the reality of an era (Afiah et al., 2022). This caused the author to be more creative in writing a literary work related to the common problems of society around. Also through a literary work, an author can communicate to the readers and deliver the message an author wants to say (Yulianti et al., 2022). At last, the readers gain environmental information from reading a literary work with a socio-cultural background that reflects society at a certain period (Asriyanti et al., 2022). Environmental damage is often regarded as a very detrimental act for life. Literary writers often assume that environmental damage causes not only a momentary loss but also a tremendous loss. The environment in which humans live on earth is not only for today but also for the next generation. The people who live at this time are people who borrow the natural environment from future generations (Lestari, 2018).

Seeing this condition, literary works can be present as a trigger to awaken awareness of the importance of maintaining the relationship between humans and nature or the environment. The reason is that human life is described through a literary work in a form of fiction and presented the phenomena that happened in the reality of human life (Mutmainnah et al., 2022). Literature that closes with nature also functions as a critique of the exploitation of the environment (Murti, 2019). An author usually writes as a medium to put his thought because if an author starts to think about something, he will write it based on the current situation he has in mind (Hasjim et al. 2020). Humans and nature have a very close causal relationship and it becomes the issue portrayed in 'Komat-Kamit,' one of the chapters in Tejo and Kamba's *Tuhan Maha Asik*. 'Komat-Kamit' presents how the character is interconnected to nature. The interconnectedness describes human's gratitude for God's blessing through nature. The study of environmental issues in a literary work is considered essential to raising enlightenment in humans. In response to environmental issues, a strong need is urgently required to encourage people's awareness of the environment (Arafah et al., 2021). A broader perspective on human language in writing a literary work can also capture its cultural environment (Arafah et al., 2020).

Studying literature needs interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and trans-disciplinary perspectives. Literary research can be related to multidisciplinary sciences (Ahmadi, et.al, 2019). This can result in comprehensive results to answer complex problems. Ecocriticism is the study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view where all sciences come together to analyze the environment and brainstorm possible solutions for the correction of the contemporary environmental situation (Mambrol, 2016). Ecocriticism investigates the relationship between humans and the natural world in literature. It deals with how environmental issues, cultural issues concerning the environment, and attitudes towards nature are presented and analyzed. That is why when a literary work has a relation to historical background and common issues, the text's sociality and communicability can be captured (Fadillah et al. 2022). One of the main goals of ecocriticism is to study how individuals in society behave and react to nature and ecological aspects. As a result, studying every perspective needs to be examined based on the effectiveness and relation to the environment itself (Anggrawan et al., 2019).

The objective of this study is to explore the interconnectedness between humans and nature as reflected in 'Komat Kamit' of Tejo and Kamba's *Tuhan Maha Asik*. Humans and nature have a causal relationship. Human action brings about nature's response. Nature can be a human's companion. It means humans should regard nature as a friend. Furthermore, it needs to remember that human behavior is still attributed to inner motives, desires, intentions, aims, and plans (Purwaningsih et al., 2020). Therefore, the relationship can result in goodness and welfare for human when human treats nature properly well. Thus, such a relationship can be seen in the book written by Tejo and Kamba (2020) in the chapter entitled 'Komat-Kamit.' By presenting the essence of this chapter, this study can push human awareness of this relationship. This may make humans awake to realize our responsibility to preserve nature. Finally, this study is expected to maintain ecological balance and sustainability.

II. LITERARY REVIEW

Ecocriticism is the study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view where all sciences come together to analyze the environment and brainstorm possible solutions for the correction of the contemporary environmental situation (Mambrol, 2016). Ecocriticism investigates the relationship between humans and the natural world in literature. It deals with how environmental issues, cultural issues concerning the environment, and attitudes

towards nature are presented and analyzed. One of the main goals of ecocriticism is to study how individuals in society behave and react concerning nature and ecological aspects. According to Mishra (2016), ecocriticism applies ecology or ecological principles to the study of literature. In line with Mishra's idea, Buell et al. (2011) define ecocriticism as a study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalists' praxis.

Ecocriticism is concerned with the relationships between literature and environment or how man's relationships with his physical environment are reflected in literature (Tosic, 2006). Ecocriticism is considered to explore the relationship between humans and non-humans, which is represented in literature. The relationship deals with humanity's destructive impact on the biosphere (Marland, 2013). Environmental Justice: Ecocriticism underlines environmental justice as man's voracious urge to conquer nature is somewhat misleading. We used to believe ourselves to be superior to the other life forms that inhabit the biosphere. But now we realize that nature is not a subordinate but a co-inhabitant of this earth's ecosystem. We should change our self-destructive motives. If humans try to destroy nature, they will be paid back with their coins. Our global crisis is not because of how ecosystems function. It is because of how our ethical systems function. Getting through the crisis requires understanding our impact on nature. It requires understanding those ethical systems and using that understanding to reform them (Mishra, 2016).

The new term Ecocriticism was invented by William Rueckert in his essay *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism* in 1978 (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996). "The conceptual and practical problem is to find the grounds upon which two communities— the human, the natural—can coexist, cooperate, and flourish in the biosphere" (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996, p. 107). This supports the idea that humans and non-humans should live in harmony. Harmony cannot be created if humans do not appreciate non-humans' existence. According to Glotfelty and Fromm (1996), ecocriticism discusses interconnections between nature and culture, especially the cultural artifacts of language and literature (p. xix). As a theoretical discourse, it deals with the human and non-human relationship. This statement explains the position of ecocriticism toward literature.

Buell et al. (2011) state that ecocriticism begins with the realization that human awareness to care about nature or the environment can be built by the power of words, stories, and pictures; therefore, such literary works can help us to overcome environmental problems. In other words, ecocriticism can be a means to show that literature can be considered an attractive tool to revive human care and concern for nature and to create various creative thoughts related to the survival of the earth in the future (Sabrina, 2021).

Ecocriticism purposely explores the interconnectedness between humans and nature. Therefore, through ecocriticism within the literature, we do self-realization of our behavior toward nature (Mishra & Sarangi, 2017). Garrard (2012) states that ecocritics can help with the definition, exploration, and even resolution of the broader ecological problem. In the theory, the connection between humans and nature is like subject and object. Humans position nature as their object. This pushes and that literature plays important role in solving environmental problems. Through literature, environmental awareness can be raised.

Art and literature can be employed as reliable instruments to foster environmental responsibility and awareness among individuals (Özdemir, 2006; Arafah & Kaharuddin, 2019). Literature touches everything in the whole scope, including environmental problems. The environmental problem becomes one important aspect that is popular now and relevant to earth safety for the future. Therefore, in the mid-eighties, some people began to be conscious and they started to relate literature and the environment in response to that problem.

III. METHOD

This study applies descriptive qualitative. Narrative text in the chapter 'Komat-Kamit' in *Tuhan Maha Asik* (Tejo & Kamba, 2020, p. 93-102) is analyzed by applying the concept of ecocriticism initially proposed by Rueckert and developed by other researchers. A document study is also used in this study. In the document study, the data are examined and interpreted to elicit, get, to find out empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss in Bowen, 2009). The data in this study were examined to explore the interconnectedness between humans and nature in the chapter 'Komat-Kamit.' The data source in this study is one of the chapters in *Tuhan Maha Asik*. The data are in the form of phrases, sentences, and paragraphs in the chapter that contain information about the interconnection between humans and nature. The data were collected through heuristic and hermeneutic reading techniques (Nurgiyantoro, 2019). It means that the data were collected by reading and making notes of some important points related to the study. Then the data were analyzed by grouping data based on the characteristics of each research indicator. In the data analysis, there are four points as research indicators in this study. After the data were grouped, the presentation and the conclusion were drawn.

IV. DISCUSSION

A. *Insight from Komat-Kamit*

'Komat-Kamit' or murmuring is moving (of mouth or lips) as if one is praying, or movements of lips or mouth (without making a sound). This activity has become a habit for many people in Indonesia. As described in the story entitled *Tuhan Maha Asik* (2020), one of the chapters 'Komat-Kamit' tells a story about a father whose son is Samin.

His father has a habit of murmuring at work. He has the custom to murmur while sanding or polishing woods. The result of his work is very beautiful and in demand. Buyers come not only from domestic but also from foreign countries. Many people admire the furniture made by his father (Tejo & Kamba, 2020, p. 93).

In line with Mirsha's opinion (2016), humans and nature should live in harmony. The harmony is presented in the chapter 'Komat-Kamit.' The habit of Samin's father represents what we do affects nature and the environment around us. His work is so good that it attracts many customers due to his good habit. However, the good results are not solely due to his murmuring habit but due to his awareness of his actions towards what he is doing. He feels mingled with the object he is working on. It greatly affects the result of his work. As a result, the natural atmosphere supports his life.

Samín's father murmurs not only when working, but also planting trees, cleaning the garden, and taking care of the plants. He always chirps. But, the chirping is not a random one. It is a prayer and a form of thanksgiving to God as The Creator of Nature (Tejo & Kamba, 2020, p. 94). This habit is noticed by Samín, his son. How beautiful their garden is, how fragrant the flowers are. The trees are growing taller. Samín thinks that murmuring had a huge impact on the fertility and beauty of his garden. His father's success in gardening is the result of his habits. The murmurings of his father are an indication of his treatment of nature. Nature welcomes it naturally. Trees welcome him by growing tall and lush. Flowers respond with fragrance. This proves that nature responds to what humans do.

Of course, murmuring is not a benchmark for success and nature's response to human actions. However, murmuring is a representation of gratitude, and a sense of connection with nature for what is available and is given. This is an insight into Samín's father's murmuring habit. It has a double meaning (Tejo & Kamba, 2020, p. 98). Habits contain not only explicit but also implicit meanings. Its meaning lies not only in what he says but in the meaning of what he does. The habit of Samín's father proves the interconnection between humans and nature.

B. Gratitude for Nature

The story in the 'Komat-Kamit' chapter describes how important it is to be grateful for nature. Nature is the creation of God, and we should be grateful for it. Gratitude is an expression of admiration for God's creation. Nature is the reason for us to be always grateful for God's mercy towards humans. The gratitude for the natural beauty that is displayed beautifully and fertile is implemented with the 'Komat-Kamit' custom by Samín and his father.

"Bagaimana tak berterima kasih bila rumpun bambu kuning dan bambu kendang tumbuh dengan indah di pekarangan belakangnya, kutilang selalu menyayi, dan mawar-melati semerbak senantiasa" (Tejo & Kamba, 2020, p. 94)."

Translation:

How would you not be grateful if the clumps of yellow bamboo and bamboo drums grow beautifully in the backyard, the finches always sing, and the jasmine roses are always fragrant.

They murmur as a reason of gratitude for the garden. Samín's father believes that gratitude makes their garden flourish and be beautiful. Trees grow dense. Various kinds of flowers grow with their fragrance. It is such stunning beautiful scenery for the visitors. The story above gives the meaning that humans and nature are related. The connection can be felt clearly, and it can be proven by nature's reaction to our gratitude. Humans and nature have a very special relationship. If nature is treated with extraordinary gratitude, nature will give service as gratitude. Nature is given by God to those who consider it a gift to be grateful for.

Samín always follows his father's habits. Samín always murmurs when gardening. This catches the attention of his friends. One of them is Christine. Christine is always amazed by Samín's new habit. His mouth is always murmuring in the garden. She asks him about his habit. Samín replies that his Komat-Kamit is the prayer of thanks to God for the garden.

"Aku harus matur suwun karena Yang Maha Pencipta sudah menciptakan kebun yang begini indahnya" (Tejo & Kamba, 2020, p. 94).

Translation:

I have to express gratitude to God who has created such a beautiful garden.

The murmuring habit teaches Samín to always pray and be grateful for the nature created by the Almighty. This is what his father always does; therefore, they have a garden of great beauty and fertility. However, in this chapter, Komat-Kamit or murmuring is not illustrated as the main thing in expressing our gratitude. The most important part of gratitude for nature is our good treatment of nature itself. The sincere intention in caring for plants and the garden is an implementation of our sincere gratitude to the Creator. It is as explained in the chapter.

"...kedekatan kepada Tuhan tidak ditentukan oleh ritual formal seperti sibuk baca alhamdulillah dan semacamnya sebagai ekspresi rasa syukur atas fenomena alam" (Tejo & Kamba, 2020, p. 101).

Translation:

...closeness to God is not determined by formal rituals such as busy reading alhamdulillah and others as expressions of gratitude for natural phenomena.

This statement assures us that our gratitude for natural phenomena lies not in the speech ritual but in our behavior towards nature itself. It is supported by Buell et al. (2011). Gratitude for natural phenomena can be proven by taking good care of nature itself. Our good relationship with nature is the realization of our true gratitude.

C. Respectful Attitude toward Nature

Gratitude for the phenomenon of natural beauty lies not in the speech ritual but in the treatment. As Christine does, she shows more of her amazement at the extraordinarily beautiful garden. She always observes the trees, fruits, and various other plants in the garden. She is very happy and very grateful if she would be invited to the garden again (Tejo & Kamba, 2020, p. 95). Christine's gratitude is expressed by his respect for the beauty of nature itself. She is not as busy as Samin. He is murmuring through the garden. His attention focuses only on what he has to say. Samin does not pay attention to what is presented by nature. His attention is drained by memorizing his words. This makes him lose consciousness of enjoying the natural beauty in front of his eyes.

"Lupa, Ayah. Tapi, selama di kebun, aku berkomat-kamit seperti ayah, tak henti-henti" (Tejo & Kamba, 2020, p. 95).

Translation:

I forget, Father. But, while I am in the garden, I am murmuring like you, incessantly.

His busy murmuring makes him forget how beautiful the garden is. His awareness is only in the ritual of his speech, not in his behavior. This distinguishes between Christine's and Samin's grateful memories. Christine's awareness of the garden results in her treatment of nature. She admires the beauty of the garden so much that she promised to develop plantations for the common good (Tejo & Kamba, 2020, p. 97).

Christine's awareness is a form of respect for nature. Nature presents extraordinary beauty. Nature can be a place to express gratitude to the Creator. This makes her realize that nature must be preserved, cared for, and developed as well as possible because nature can present beauty. Nature can be treated as a friend to provide well for humans. This is how Christine feels. It is no wonder that she can remember well how many jackfruit trees, various types of butterflies, and various types of flowers are in the garden. She is well aware of being in the garden. She wants everyone to be able to feel the way she does about the garden growing.

Awareness of our relationship with nature manifests a good treatment of nature itself. Our awareness of the essence of nature in our lives resulted in our respectful behavior towards nature. Respect does not mean deity. Respect for nature means building self-awareness that humans and nature have a close relationship. Nature reacts according to human behavior. Nature presents with all its phenomena. Humans ought to protect it. Humans should treat it well. If human treatment is well, nature will adjust everything to our actions. The story reflected in the chapter Komat-Kamit shows that literature can raise human awareness about our connection to nature (Mambrol, 2016; Miirsha, 2016; Tasic, 2016; Marland, 2013; Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996; Buell et al., 2011; Garrard, 2012; Özdemir, 2006; Arafah & Kaharuddin, 2019).

D. Environmental Lesson

The murmuring habit practiced by Samin's father in the book Tuhan Maha Asik (2020) has a broad meaning. The murmurings made when gardening, planting trees and caring for flowers produce extraordinary garden results. It describes the response or reaction of plants, the environment, and nature to his father's treatment.

"Manusia tidak akan memperoleh apapun kecuali dengan usaha dan kerja keras, yang tiada lain didasarkan pada semangat juang yang berasal dari kekuatan spiritual" (Tejo & Kamba, 2020, p. 97).

Translation:

Man will gain nothing except by effort and hard work, which is based on nothing but a fighting spirit from spiritual power.

'Komat-Kamit' or murmuring becomes a habit interpreted as a prayer and an expression of the power of effort and hard work. Murmuring is only a medium to state hard work to achieve something. When Samin's father wants to get a beautiful and fertile garden, he tries hard and sincerely offers his best efforts and his best prayers to make it happen. His murmuring is a symbol that humans are serious about treating nature. Nature responds according to human sincerity.

This is something to contemplate that nature always reacts according to humans' treatment. Therefore, implicitly nature will provide the best if humans try to treat it best too. The relationship between humans and nature is certainly very close. Nature is not an object to be consumed. Although in reality, human considers nature as an object (Garrard, 2012). Nature is a friend that must be respected as a sign of gratitude to God. Gratitude for nature can be done in various ways. Efforts in treating nature well will produce extraordinary natural reactions. The relationship between humans and nature is real. Therefore, humans and nature should be mingled as a whole.

Murmuring is not the only way to implement gratitude towards nature as the creation of God. However, it symbolizes that humans must work hard, and be eager to navigate the ocean of life to realize their aims. Likewise, regarding nature's reaction to humans, we want nature and the environment under our desire, so we must strive to treat nature well. A much-related thing that happens nowadays is that nature seems often unfriendly. The environment is so frightening to humans. Humans and nature are like two enemies. This is the right time for humans to reflect on how humans treat nature. Humans permeate their relationship with it. We should improve our relationship with nature. We should evaluate our treatment of nature. Nature will respond to human kindness because humans and nature have a close relationship.

The important lesson we can take from the chapter 'Komat-Kamit' is that the relationship between humans and nature is not just jargon such as "Let's Preserve Nature," "Let's Keep the Environment Clean," and "Let's Take Care of the Forest," and so on. The relationship between humans and nature needs real action. Action-based on awareness is needed. Nature must be treated respectfully. This awareness is a feeling of gratitude for real natural phenomena. Raising

awareness of the relationship between humans and nature is a human task. This aim is achieved in the chapter 'Komat-Kamit' in *Tuhan Maha Asik* (2020) by Tejo and Kamba.

V. CONCLUSION

The chapter 'Komat-Kamit' in Tejo and Kamba's *Tuhan Maha Asik* (2020) can raise our awareness to preserve the connection between humans and nature. In the chapter, we can find the reflection on the interconnectedness between humans and nature. The story in the chapter implies that humans should behave properly well in nature. Nature reacts based on human behavior. From the story, we learn that we should be grateful for nature. We should also respect nature. Our gratitude and respectful attitude toward nature bring about ecological balance. The 'Komat-Kamit' or murmuring is symbolized as a medium to show human gratitude and a respectful attitude toward nature. However, the interpretation of the 'Komat-Kamit' lies not in the words but in the action. It means that the awareness of the connection between humans and nature can be realized by our real actions. The awareness can be raised through literature. Such awareness is also raised in the chapter 'Komat-Kamit' in *Tuhan Maha Asik* (2020). The story in the chapter reflects the real interconnectedness between humans and nature. In conclusion, the chapter in the book plays an important role to create ecological balance and sustainability.

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