



Jurnal Sastra Indonesia

<https://journal.unnes.ac.id/journals/jsi>



The Values of Feminism in *the Novel Mata Dan Nyala Api Purba* by Okky Madasari

Yadia Rahma¹, Sarwiji Suwandi², & Edy Suryanto³

^{1,2,3} Indonesian Language Education, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia

Article Info

Article History

Submitted April 14, 2025

Accepted July 15, 2025

Publish July 25, 2025

Keyword

feminism, novel, Mata dan Nyala Api Purba (The Eyes and the Ancient Flame).

Abstract

Feminist values refer to the basic principles that underlie the feminist movement and thought. These values emphasize gender equality, justice, and women's empowerment in various aspects of life. This qualitative study analyzes Okky Madasari's novel "Mata dan Nyala Api Purba" (Eyes and Ancient Flames). Data were obtained through text content analysis using a purposive sampling technique. Document analysis was used for data collection, while validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and methods. The analysis was conducted interactively to gain a deeper understanding of the liberal feminist values within the work. The analysis shows that the values of equal rights and opportunities are the most dominant aspect in the novel, with a frequency of 32%. This is reflected in the representation of female characters who have equal access and opportunities to men, both in private and public spaces. The value of individual independence is also prominent (25%), depicting women as figures capable of making decisions and acting independently. Furthermore, individual freedom and life choices are recorded at 21%, demonstrating the space for female characters to determine their own direction. Public participation reaches 14%, demonstrating women's involvement in the social and political spheres. Meanwhile, rejection of traditional gender roles emerged at 7%, demonstrating resistance to stereotypes that limit women's roles in society. Overall, the five components of liberal feminist values in this novel demonstrate that Mata dan Nyala Api Purba (The Eyes and the Ancient Flame) is imbued with the spirit of emancipation and gender equality. Therefore, this literary work can be used as a learning resource to enrich understanding of feminist values within the context of Indonesian culture.

*E-mail:

¹yadiarahna@student.uns.ac.id

²sarwijiswan@staff.uns.ac.id

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DOI 10.15294/jsi.v14i2.27583

P ISSN: 2252-6315 E-ISSN: 2685-9599

INTRODUCTION

In the history of Indonesian literature, issues surrounding women have become an important theme that continues to develop. The development of Indonesian literature shows a wider openness to social problems, including the struggle for gender equality, which is at the core of the discourse of feminism (Kurniawan, 2024). Literature is not only a means of entertainment, but also a reflective and ideological instrument that can represent and shape the collective consciousness of readers (Oktaferani et al., 2023). Through literary works, various issues such as men's power over women, the placement of women as inferior parties, the exclusion of women, and resistance to oppressive social rules can be conveyed clearly and strongly (Muzakka, 2017).

Along with the strengthening of the feminism movement both globally and nationally, there has been a paradigm shift in how women are represented in various forms of media, including in literary works. Literature, which has been a mirror of social reality and a means of conveying ideas, now plays a role in reshaping the position and identity of women (Wardani & Akhmad Fatoni, 2025). Today, more and more literary stories show women no longer as weak and obedient figures, but as strong individuals, in control of their lives, and daring to challenge oppressive social, cultural, and political rules (Lestiyani et al., 2024).

This trend shows that literature is not just a tool of entertainment or documentation of life, but also a space to voice important ideas about gender equality and women's empowerment (Indriyani, 2024). Through stories, characters, and conflicts, literature can reveal forms of injustice against women and depict the struggle to change and resist (Nugroho & Suhendi, 2022). This image is essential to change the old perspective that often limits women to obedient wives, self-sacrificing mothers, or objects of male adoration.

However, it is also important to critically examine how the representation of women in popular literature is still often trapped in the repetition of old stereotypes (Irianti & Adesari, 2019). The study of literary works has become increasingly important as an effort to read and critique how the discourse about women and feminism (Afiah & Muslim, 2021). Literature has excellent power to foster awareness for writers and readers about gender issues and inequality, as well as being a tool to encourage social change (Taufiqi et al., 2024). It is therefore essential for readers and literary researchers to not only enjoy the story, but also to read critically the ideological message it contains, especially in the context of the feminist struggle (Lilie Senaharjanta et al., 2022).

Considerable research on feminism in Indonesian literature has been carried out, especially in works depicting women's oppression (Edy Nugroho & Dyah Prabaningrum, 2023). However, as the influence of the feminist movement in the world and Indonesia grows, literature begins to show women who are more diverse and courageous against the injustices they face (Wili Fitri et al., 2025). This change is evident in the literary works written by female writer, Okky Madasari, who consistently voices resistance to social inequality, including gender inequality. Okky Madasari is an Indonesian woman writer known for her courage in voicing injustice through her literary works. In the *Mata* series, especially *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba*, Okky presents the narrative of adolescent adventures with a different approach, not just for entertainment, but as an ideological space that inserts the values of gender awareness, cultural diversity, and ecological justice. This novel places a young woman, Mata, as the main character who is courageous, critical, and resilient in the face of various physical, spiritual, and social challenges.

Examining the values of feminism in the novel *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* is important because, in reality, there are still rare works of Indonesian youth literature that feature strong female characters and have critical awareness (Setiawati & Kurniawan, 2024a). In contrast, many teen novels subtly reinforce patriarchal views through images of beautiful, gentle, and male-dependent women (Dwi et al., 2024). The novel *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* is an exception that deserves to be appreciated and studied more deeply because it presents a young woman who is forward-thinking and courageous. Therefore, this study is not only important from an academic point of view, but also has educational value to foster awareness about gender equality from an early age (Desmila & Suryana, 2023). This research is also important in the context of literary education in higher education, which provides a broader space for value-based learning, and the social context requires learning resources that are not only interesting in terms of story, but also ideologically meaningful (Yunaika, 2025).

Based on the above explanation, this study aims to identify and analyze the values of feminism in the novel *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba*. The research focuses not only on the representation of female figures but also on power relations, forms of resistance to domination, and the influence of the social and cultural environment in shaping the figure's consciousness. The approach used is a feminist literary critique by considering intersectional aspects, including gender relations, nature, local culture, and power.

By examining this novel in depth, it is hoped that this research can enrich the study of feminism in Indonesian literature, especially in adolescent literature. In addition, this study is also expected to be a reference in the development of contextual, critical, and gender-sensitive literary learning, to form a generation of readers sensitive to the beauty of literature, social justice, and humanity.

METHODS

This research is a qualitative study with the object of study in the form of the novel *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* by Okky Madasari. As a qualitative research approach, the approach used is descriptive and analytical (Yuliani, 2018). The primary focus of this research is to analyze literary texts in depth to understand the meaning, themes, and characters contained in them. Researchers play a comprehensive role in its implementation, from planning, implementation, data collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting results. The researcher also functions as an active reader, namely consistently reading, observing, and identifying the novel's language units, per the research objectives (Nurhayati et al., 2023).

The strategy used in this study is a content analysis approach, because the primary data source comes from literary works in the form of written texts. This approach is considered important in assessing literary works and other written texts through the identification of patterns and themes of feminism that emerge in narratives (Ahyar, 2019). The data analyzed included words, phrases, and sentences that reflect the values of liberal feminism in the novel *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* by Okky Madasari. This study's primary data source is the novel *Nyala Api Purba* by Okky Madasari. The sampling technique in this study is *purposive sampling*, which is used to collect the data needed for the novel in order to obtain the correct and accurate data to obtain the expected results (Lenaini, 2021).

The data collection technique in this study is document analysis, according to Putra & Lisnawati (2024) Document analysis is a beneficial technique in qualitative research, as it allows researchers to assess the contents of documents systematically and thoroughly, providing rich insights into the social and cultural context present in the document. The types of triangulation used in this study are source triangulation and methods (Sa'adah & Tri Rahmayati, 2022). Source triangulation is beneficial in ensuring that the data collected is consistent and legitimate from different points of view (Abdussamad et al., 2024). The triangulation method allows researchers to obtain a more holistic view of the phenomenon being

studied by combining various techniques to verify the results of the research (Sa'adah & Tri Rahmayati, 2022). This source triangulation and methods combination aims to enrich research data and reduce potential bias that could affect the final findings. This study uses interactive analysis. Interactive analysis is an approach to qualitative data analysis that focuses on the dynamic process between data collection and analysis, where researchers are constantly interacting with data to build a more profound understanding (Umrati & Wijaya, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of documents carried out by researchers on the novel *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* by Okky Madasari, five components of liberal feminism values based on Betty Friedan's principles have been found. The components of liberal feminism values in the novel series *Mata*, based on Betty Friedan's principles, can be seen in the following table 1.

Table 1. The number of components of liberal feminism values in the novel *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* by Okky Madasari.

Components of Liberal Feminism Values	Novel Mata dan Nyala Api Purba	Percentage
Equality of Rights and Opportunities	9	32%
Individual Freedom and Choice.	6	21%
Public Participation.	4	14%
Rejection of Traditional Gender Roles.	2	7%
Individual Independence	7	25%
Sum	28	100%

The novel *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* by Okky Madasari contains various values of liberal feminism reflected through the actions, dialogues, and experiences of the main characters and supporting characters. Based on the data in Table 1, this novel shows the highest representation of feminist values compared to the other three novels in the *Mata series*, totaling 28 data points from the five components of liberal feminism values. This shows that *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* is the peak of the narrative of struggle and strengthening women's identity in this series.

The most dominant component of liberal feminism values in this novel is individual independence, with 7 data points (26% of the total

data). Furthermore, the value of individual freedom and choice ranks second with 6 data points (21%). The value of equal rights and opportunities also appeared significantly (6 data points or 21%). Meanwhile, the value of rejection of traditional gender roles appeared in as many as 2 data points (7%). Although they are fewer in number than the other components, this aspect is still important because it shows the criticism of gender stereotypes that limit women to only domestic or subordinate roles. The value of public participation is the same as the rejection of traditional gender roles, namely 4 data (14%). This shows that female figures not only play a role in private spaces but also take an active role in public spaces, such as communities, politics, or other social struggles.

Overall, *Ancient Eyes and Flames* strongly represent the values of liberal feminism, with an emphasis on independence, freedom, and equality. This shows that this novel presents an engaging and captivating adventure story and is an effective medium of social criticism against various forms of gender inequality still deeply rooted in society. Through the courageous, intelligent, and independent protagonist, this novel voices the importance of equal rights and opportunities for women, while arousing young readers' awareness of issues of gender-based injustice. Thus, this novel is not only entertainment, but also an educational tool that can internalize the values of gender equality and justice. This is important in forming the character and critical mindset of the younger generation towards social issues, especially in building a more inclusive and equal society.

Identifying Equality of Rights and Opportunities

Equality of rights and opportunities is one of the key principles of liberal feminism, which emphasizes that women should have equal access to men in all aspects of life, including education, employment, freedom of speech, and social and political roles (Silalahi et al., 2025). Equality of rights and opportunities is the principle that states that every individual, regardless of gender, race, religion, social background, or other factors, has equal rights and equal opportunities in various aspects of life, such as education, employment, politics, law, and social life (Arfan Gustama & Syihabudin Nuha, 2025). In the novel *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* by Okky Madasari, the value of equal rights and opportunities is depicted through the representation of empowered, independent, and active female figures in various aspects of life. In the novel *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* by Okky Madasari, this value is consistently seen through the depiction of active and empowered female characters.

Female protagonists, such as Mata, are portrayed as having equal opportunities to pursue higher education and expand their horizons. There are no gender restrictions that limit their access to knowledge. This reflects that women have the right to the same education as men (Islahuddin et al., 2021). Female characters are not only shown as obedient figures, but also critical of unequal social realities. They voice their opinions freely, including questioning the unjust power structure.

Matara kini sudah menjadi guru yang mengajar anak-anak seusiamu. (11)

Matara is now a teacher who teaches children your age. (11)

Matara, a woman, managed to access education and a professional job as a teacher. This shows that she has the same opportunities as men to thrive in education and contribute to the public sphere, which is the primary goal of liberal feminism: equality in access to education and careers.

As the main character, Mata is active in adventure and decision-making, which is usually in the classical narrative dominated by male characters. In the story, he is not a follower but a leader and primary mover who explores various places and solves problems.

Identifying individual Freedoms

Individual freedom and choice are key values in liberal feminism. This value emphasizes that every individual, including women, has the right to determine his or her way of life without pressure, discrimination, or coercion from other parties, be it family, society, or the state (Thurfah Ilaa, 2021). Individual freedom and choice are fundamental principles in social life that emphasize that everyone has the right to determine his or her way of life, including in terms of beliefs, opinions, lifestyle, work, and other personal decisions, without coercion, pressure, or discrimination from others (Insani, 2020). In the novel *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* by Okky Madasari, the themes of individual freedom and choice are reflected in several aspects of the narrative and character of the main character.

One prominent example is how the main character tries to take control of his own life, despite the patriarchal social and cultural pressures. She refuses to submit to norms that limit women's roles to just a wife or mother, and chooses a way of life based on her principles and desires. These choices often carry consequences, such as social rejection, family conflicts, and alienation, but the main character defends his right to choose.

Matara mengajar biologi, sesuai dengan jurusan yang ia pelajari selama kuliah, sesuai juga dengan pelajaran yang ia sukai sejak di bangku sekolah. (18)

Matara teaches biology by the major he studied during college and the subjects he has liked since he was in school. (18)

Matara chose a life path based on her interests and abilities. She loved biology since school, chose that major in college, and now teaches it. This shows that he is free to determine his way of life, without being forced by norms. In addition, this novel also describes that the freedom to make life choices is not only related to work or education but also touches on existential aspects such as the freedom to think, opinion, and voice injustice. The main character is given a narrative space to convey resistance to the oppressive system, reinforcing the message that women can determine their own destiny.

Thus, *Mata and Flame of Ancient Flame* succeed in depicting the value of individual freedom and choice as a form of resistance to patriarchal domination. This value is not only important in the literary context, but it is also relevant as a reflection of real social conditions, in which women still struggle to gain space and recognition of their autonomy.

Identifying Public Participation

From the perspective of liberal feminism, public participation reflects women's active involvement in social, political, and economic spaces (Shodiqin & Risdayah, 2025). This participation is an important indicator of achieving gender equality, as it shows that women have a recognized voice, role, and contribution in the lives of the wider community, not just limited to the domestic sphere (Rambe et al., 2025). Public participation is active involvement in community life (Nursyifa et al., 2023).

In the novel *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba*, the value of public participation is represented through female characters involved in social activities, education, and even resistance to oppressive systems. The main character, for example, not only becomes a witness to injustice but also takes a position as an agent of change. She engages in discussions, expresses her opinions openly, and shows courage to fight against patriarchal norms that have limited women's roles in public spaces.

Matara kini sudah menjadi guru yang mengajar anak-anak seusiamu. (11)

Matara is now a teacher who teaches children your age. (11)

The involvement of women figures in the public space is also displayed through roles in education or social organizations. Not only present as a passive participant, but as an individual who contributes ideas and makes important decisions. This reflects that the women in this novel have gone beyond traditional boundaries and demand recognition of their intellectual capacity and the right to contribute to social development. Teaching is a direct contribution to society, especially the younger generation. In liberal feminism, this signifies that women are not only allowed but must be given space and rights to be involved in public activities and community development.

Public participation in this novel becomes a form of symbolic resistance to the restrictive system. Okky Madasari raised the issue of how women's voices are often ignored, but courage and perseverance can break through barriers and carve out positions in the broader social sphere. Thus, *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* voices the importance of public participation for women and shows how such participation is part of the feminist struggle for equality and recognition amid unequal social structures.

Identifying Traditional Role Rejection

One of the core struggles of liberal feminism is to reject traditional gender roles that limit women's space of movement only in the domestic realm, such as being homemakers, obedient wives, or women who are entirely dependent on men (Andriadi & Melia Septi, 2023). This rejection is not only a form of resistance to patriarchal structures, but also a form of awareness of the importance of individual freedom and equal roles in various aspects of life (Iktisah & Supratno, 2025).

In the novel *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba*, the rejection of traditional roles is reflected through female characters who refuse to submit to social expectations about how women should behave and live. The main character explicitly shows her disapproval of the system that requires her to marry at a young age, live in complete obedience to her husband, or sacrifice her education and ideals for outdated cultural norms.

Matara sesungguhnya tak pernah bercita-cita menjadi guru. Ia kuliah jurusan biologi sebab ia ingin seperti ilmu-wan-ilmuwan yang diidolakannya. Ia ingin menjadi seperti Darwin yang meneliti hewan-hewan di Galapagos, ia ingin seperti Alfred Wallace

yang mencatat hewan-hewan di se-luruh kepulauan Nusantara, ia juga ingin seperti Eugene Dubois yang menggali bebatuan tua untuk menemukan jejak-jejak manusia purba (18)

Matara never dreamed of becoming a teacher. He majored in biology to be like the scientists he idolized. He wants to be like Darwin, who researched animals in the Galapagos; he wants to be like Alfred Wallace, who recorded animals throughout the archipelago; he also wants to be like Eugene Dubois, who dug up old rocks to find traces of ancient humans (18)

Matara's dream of becoming a field researcher exploring, digging, and recording scientific findings is a historically male-dominated profession. Her desire to step into this world shows a rejection of traditional female roles and replaces them with choices based on potential and personal interests. Critical attitudes towards traditional gender roles are also shown through the actions of female figures who choose a different path of life from the general norms. They refuse to be objects or complements in a man's life and instead struggle to be an active, thoughtful subject, and decide the direction of his own life. In a patriarchal cultural context, this courage is a form of rebellion full of feminist meaning.

The rejection of traditional gender roles is also criticized through narratives that show how the system structurally harms and oppresses women. By debunking myths and unjust social customs, this novel provides a space for readers to understand that being a woman should not mean submission, but rather having the right to choose any role in society (Widhiyana, 2024). Thus, *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* presents a portrait of women who dared to challenge traditional roles within the framework of liberal feminism (Zaini, 2014). This is an important part of the struggle for equality, freedom of thought, and freedom of action.

Identifying Individual Independence

Individual independence is one of the main principles in liberal feminism, which emphasizes that every individual, including women, has the right to live physically, emotionally, intellectually, and economically independently (Khafidhoturrofia & Utami Dwi Isma, 2024). In patriarchal societies, women are often taught to depend on men in various aspects of life. Therefore, the struggle to become an independent person becomes an important symbol of liberation and gender equality (Setiawati & Kurniawan, 2024).

In the novel *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba*, the value of individual independence is powerfully portrayed through a female character who refuses to depend on others, especially men, to determine her life path. The main character is told to try to get out of the shadows of family rules, social norms, and environmental pressures to live a life that suits his own choices (Wening, 2018).

Matara kini sudah menjadi guru yang mengajar anak-anak seusiamu. (11)

Matara is now a teacher who teaches children your age. (11)

By becoming a teacher, Matara showed her social and economic independence. She does not rely on traditional female roles (such as wife or mother), but chooses a path that benefits others. Independence in this novel is shown in various forms: the courage of the main character to make big decisions independently, his ability to face the consequences of his choices, and his struggle to obtain education or recognition without having to submit to an unjust system. The female character not only refuses to be a passive object in the story, but also appears as an active subject with complete control over herself.

In addition, the aspect of independence can also be seen from the efforts of the figures to stand economically and socially, showing that women can survive and even develop without dependence on male figures or patriarchal institutions (Dalimoenthe, 2020). This reinforces the message that independence symbolizes resistance and an important foundation in forming a complete and independent woman's identity. Through characters and deep storylines (Kusuma Wardani et al., 2024) *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* voice the importance of individual independence as part of the feminist struggle. The novel affirms that women have the full capacity and right to govern their own lives, free from domination and traditional gender role limitations (Widiarti et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the novel *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* by Okky Madasari contains strong liberal feminist values, especially regarding equal rights, individual freedom, independence, public participation, and rejection of traditional gender roles. The novel's female protagonist appears brave, independent, and a critical figure of patriarchal norms. Through the feminist literary criticism approach, it was found that this novel not only presents an adventure story, but also becomes a medium to voice gender awareness and fight

inequality. These findings reinforce the importance of literature as an educational and ideological space in forming social awareness, especially among adolescents. Therefore, *Mata dan Nyala Api Purba* deserves to be used as a source of literary learning that is contextual and gender-perspective in higher and secondary education.

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