

Environmental Damage in The Novel of *Serdadu Pantai* by Laode Insan: A Study of Ecocriticism

Bagus Muhamad Fadli , Tommi Yuniawan, Agus Nuryatin

Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

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
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Abstract

Humans easily exploit the nature because their ethics towards the environment is based on the anthropocentrism perspective. Marine pollution and environmental damage for the sake of individual or certain groups economic satisfaction indicate a lack of human awareness to protect the environment. These activities are the cause of the environmental damage in the *Serdadu Pantai* novel by Laode Insan. This study aims to find out and describe ecocriticism in the *Serdadu Pantai* novel by Laode Insan related to the environmental damage, the behavior of the characters causing the environmental damage, and social and economic backgrounds as a factor in the occurrence of the environmental damage in the novel of *Serdadu Pantai* by Laode Insan. This study applies a qualitative research employing an ecocriticism approach. The primary data source of this study is the *Serdadu Pantai* novel by Laode Insan published by PT Grasindo in 2019. The data in this study is a fragment of the text of the *Serdadu Pantai* novel by Laode Insan which allegedly contains ecological criticism. The secondary data sources are journals and books related to environmental ecology and literary ecocriticism. The results show that; (1) the environmental damage in the *Serdadu Pantai* novel was demonstrated through coral reefs damage and water pollution caused by the behavior of people who utilize natural resources in a way that is not in accordance with the concept of conservation, such as using trawlers, poisons, and bombs to catch fish, and also through the characters' way of thinking toward the environment; (2) the social and economic background as a factor in the occurrence of the environmental damage was demonstrated through a social background that lacks education about nature conservation which later gives impact on long-term environmental damage. Economic problems of livelihoods that depend on marine resources as the main source of income have also created excessive exploitative behavior of the community which causes damage to the marine ecosystems.

 Correspondence address:

Perumahan Panggi, No. 32 RT/RW 10/05 Kota Bima, Nusa Tenggara

E-mail: b.muhamadfadli@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

Literary works can be said as an author's response to the situation of nature and the surrounding community. These works are the reflection of the life observed by the authors which added with their responses and imagination towards that life (Mu'in, 2013). Literary works, as the standard medium of expression of what people have witnessed and experienced in life and what people have pondered about the aspects of life that attracts interest in direct and strong way, essentially live through the form of language. Therefore, the concerns of authors who care about the current natural conditions are expressed in a literary work (Farida, 2017). This is similar to what was stated by (Kurnianto, 2016) that literature is a meaningful imaginative world. The purpose of this statement is that authors are able to transform facts or social phenomena that occur in their surrounding environment into literary texts. This phenomenon is presented in the novel of *Serdadu Pantai* by Laode Insan.

In general, the *Serdadu Pantai* novel tells about Dayan, Surman, Poci, and Suman, a group of boys who live on the island of Buton. They spent almost every day at the sea, beach, or fish auction. These characters always had problems with climate change and it dragged them into a more complicated conflict as the children of fishermen. The conflicts presented by the author indirectly show self-criticism regarding things that need to be addressed by the Butonese people, Southeast Sulawesi. It can be said that Butonese people easily exploit nature because their ethics towards the environment are based on the anthropocentrism perspective. Marine pollution and environmental damage for the sake of individual or group economic satisfaction show a lack of human awareness to protect the environment. The high level of natural damage is caused by various factors, one of which is socio-economic that creates a desire to damage the environment for the sake of personal benefits. Through the *Serdadu Pantai* novel, the author attempts to raise the ecological

awareness of the coastal community of Buton, Southeast Sulawesi.

The coastal area can be said as a transitional area of the sea and land. It causes pressure from various activities and phenomena that occur on the land and sea. Hastuti (via Pinto, 2016) revealed that activities carried out by humans, such as settlement construction, deforestation, pond construction and so on, have some negative impacts on the coastal ecosystems. One of them is an abrasion that is caused by the felling of mangrove trees, coral reefs damage, and also the existence of shrimp ponds. This abrasion causes environmental damage such as the reduction of land area due to wave activity, tides of sea water, and damage to coastal facilities and infrastructure, such as roads, power poles, docks, and houses. In this case, land compaction causes the land surface to fall and be inundated by sea water resulting in the coastline changes. Other natural factors that also cause environmental damage are earthquakes and tsunami waves due to the coastal ecosystems damage so that there is no barrier to suppress the waves (Arifin, 2005).

Coastal areas are areas that are quite vulnerable to damage. It will cause some effects on the economic conditions of the coastal communities who depend on marine resources. Therefore, a community empowerment to raise the awareness towards this problem need to be given to ensure more effective and sustainable environmental management (Fitriansah, 2012). A coastal conservation involving the community is the key to the success of sustainable coastal conservation that can provide economic benefits for the community and local government (Wardhani, 2011).

Nature and environment are not only presented as the setting of place and atmosphere used in making the storyline in a literary work, but also as the aspects that help build the aesthetics of a literary work (Asyifa & Putri, 2018). Literary works can function as a means for authors to represent thoughts, feelings, and responses regarding an event (Asri, 2013). According to Subagiyo (2021), in the era of contemporary literature, there are not many

novels related to environmental themes. The number of literary works with environmental nuances is not proportional to the number of literary works published. Criticism of the social environment is more common even though the attention towards the environment is quite reflected in it.

Birch & Cobb (1990) argued that humans are subjects in a community that has a higher level than other creatures so that they have a moral obligation to their fellow creatures to protect and preserve the environment. Therefore, ecocriticism has a strong commitment to contribute in improving the environment by examining how humans and the environment interact.

Wiyatmi (2015) stated that the study of literary works using ecocriticism will represent how nature and environment with its various problems become an inseparable part of literary works. Literary works have more roles in preventing exploitation behavior or activities that damage the environment given that moral choices and character building are an inseparable part of the phenomenon of language and literature (Dewi, 2015).

Environmental problems that occur in this era can be solved by changing the perspective and behavior of people towards the environment. It deals with the lifestyle not only of individuals but also of the community. Nowadays, there are many communities who care about the environment and keep making socialization to preserve and protect nature and the environment. This is a form of human responsibility towards a decent life. This attitude of responsibility to protect nature is also carried out by several companies today who are innovating their products by creating environmentally friendly technologies starting from raw materials, effective, and efficient product manufacturing processes and minimizing waste that can prevent damage to the natural environment. Basically, these innovations cannot change the damaged environment back in its entirety, but there are efforts on ecological awareness as

responsibilities and forms of concern made by business owners to preserve the environment.

Yuniawan (2014) explained that ecological wisdom is any actions in carrying out life in harmony with the environment. Humans, as rulers of the environment on earth, have a very large influence on the sustainability of their habitat ecosystems. They are cultural creatures. Being cultural can be said to have culture; have reason and mind. It would be wiser if they carry out decent actions based on moral ethics and a sense of responsibility, including in environmental issues (Rusdina, 2015).

Humans must understand ethics towards the environment as part of their long-term survival. This will result in actions and policies that will have a good effect on the environment as a resource for human needs.

METHODS

This study applies an ecocriticism approach. It is a study that relates literary works to the physical environment, population growth, loss of wilderness and wild animals, rapid extinction of species, and increased contamination of air, water, and soil on earth (Love, 2003). Based on the limitations of ecocriticism, it can be explained that the study of literary works (a novel in this case of study) using ecocriticism will explain how the nature and environment with its various problems become an inseparable part of literary works.

This study was carried out by employing a qualitative descriptive observation to break down the problems faced by the community such as the environment damage in the *Serdadu Pantai* novel by Laode Insan by taking the quotations of words, sentences, and utterances as the data.

Two types of data sources were applied in this study, namely primary and secondary data sources. The primary data source is a novel entitled *Serdadu Pantai* by Laode Insan which is told in a narrative way that will provide a significant discussion about damage, preservation, and behavior to nature through ecocriticism. The secondary data source is used

to explain academically referring to several relevant journals to strengthen the arguments of the research. All of which are considered as the most qualified sources to be applied. There are three stages applied to solve the problems in this research. These stages are collecting the data, processing the data, and presenting the conclusions of the data analysis. The data of this research are in the form of sentences and paragraphs in the *Serdadu Pantai* novel by Laode Insan related to the environment.

The first step of data analysis was reading the *Serdadu Pantai* novel by Laode Insan. Sentences and paragraphs that are related to the natural environment were marked for further in-depth reading using heuristic and hermeneutic methods. The results were then interpreted by using ecocriticism theory. After that, the results of the interpretation were validated and concluded to answer the research problems.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Environmental damage occurs due to massive exploitation behavior by humans to fulfill their needs. The investigation for forms of environmental damage is carried out as an effort to find out the impact of these environmental changes on the meaning of life for humans. Ecocriticism studies that highlight the forms of environmental damage are not only carried out at a certain locality level but also growing at a universal level. This goes hand in hand with the lack of an explanation of the real impact for the lower-middle class. In this study, the form of damage to the environment occurs in the marine areas.

Forms of Environmental Damage

One kind of forms of environmental damage mostly found by the author is coral reefs damage which is caused by behavior of the community in the *Serdadu Pantai* novel. The damage to coral reefs occurs due to the less understanding of the community about the long-term values and benefits of nature. So far, their understanding of the value of coastal resources such as fisheries, coral reefs and so on is more

about seeing these resources for direct consumption. Very few coastal communities understand the use of natural resources for non-consumptive purposes such as abrasion resistance, flood control, aesthetics, use for medicine and so on. Sometimes, the non-consumptive monetary value is greater than the consumptive value. This phenomenon exists in the *Serdadu Pantai* novel by Insan Laode as quoted below.

"The coral! The coral reefs are damaged!" Poci shouted again.

Hearing the words from Poci, the three of us were suddenly shocked like people who were electrocuted in the water, especially Odi (Insan, 2019).

From this quote, it can be seen that Poci's words, a character who has emotional pressure, affects the emphatic understanding of other characters towards a situation namely the damage to coral reefs. This emphatic understanding is strengthened by the quote of Odi who strongly denied that disgraceful acts against nature in the quote; "Many coral reefs have been damaged; there are also no fish around here" (Insan, 2019:151).

Coral reef resources are one of the main sources of income and part of the fishermen's life in the *Serdadu Pantai* novel. High productivity in coral reef ecosystems can support their lives. The coral reef habitat that functions optimally will result in the potential for obtaining fish sustainably. This is because many types of fish live and search for foods in these habitats. The sustainability of coral reef ecosystems depends on hydro-oceanographic conditions, including water temperature, salinity, waves, and tides. Besides hydro-oceanographic factors, meteorological factors such as wind and human activities on land can also affect the condition of the marine waters and the coral reef ecosystem (Supriharyono, 2009).

Coral reefs functions as productive food fields for fish and various marine biota that have high economic value. It is also a nest for marine biota to lay eggs. Physically, coral reefs function as breakwaters and beach protectors from storms and have a high aesthetic value for the

development of marine tourism. Furthermore, the coral reef ecosystem is a living system that is diverse and unique to the tropics which has high productivity and diversity. However, this function does not work properly as part of the marine ecosystem and becomes an ecological issue in the *Serdadu Pantai* novel.

I was shocked after seeing the coral reefs around us. It looks like it was falling apart as if it has just been hit by a hard object. The coral fragments are still left, the coral plants are also no longer there. Some of the fish that usually live in the coral are gone (Insan, 2019:152).

This discursive quote is a form of impact of environmental damage to coral reefs caused by humans which has a chronic impact and is not temporary. Besides the damage to coral reefs, in *Serdadu Pantai* novel, the author also brings to life the issue of polluted seas in his work which is reflected in the form of criticisms of the surrounding environment, especially marine life. This is able to attract great attention from readers to pay more attention to the garbage in the coastal areas.

Waste in the oceans is inseparable from human involvement. It can be in the form of organic and inorganic. Supriharyono (2009) said that organic waste can pollute the environment chemically because it will undergo chemical changes after decomposition so that it can affect some marine fauna. Inorganic waste can also pollute the environment, especially for fauna that need sunlight as photosynthesis material. The presence of plastic will cover the waters from the sunlight. It is caused by human activities of producing waste that can damage marine life and even cause death. This phenomena has affected a lot number of fish being contaminated with waste from the massive dumping of garbage in the sea. This is reflected in the following quote.

It's unusual that a dead fish floating like that. I was thinking that the fish died from eating plastic waste and couldn't breathe for long time because they lived in a trashy ocean (Insan, 2019:8).

Through the *Serdadu Pantai* novel, it can be seen that human activities of exploiting the

sea with waste cause damage for sea animal life. This behavior certainly does not care about waste because people feel they are not harmed in order to fulfill their personal needs. Apart from the waste, the use of chemicals that can pollute seawater is also presented by Laode Insan in his work.

The problems of environmental damage and water pollution in coastal areas in the *Serdadu Pantai* novel by Laode Insan is a reflection of environmental issues that really occur in coastal areas of Indonesia. This is due to the dependence of the community on marine resources for survival. Humans' needs that keep increasing lead to excessive use and exploitation of natural resources. In addition to the community's excessive exploitation behavior, actions that pollute sea water in coastal areas are one of the causes of the decline in natural resources along with the presence of waste. Waste circulation cannot be separated from the increase in population. The risk of water pollution is an obvious threat to coastal communities in the *Serdadu Pantai* novel. Besides the behavior of littering, the pollution of sea water in coastal areas is also caused using chemicals to capture marine biota by the coastal community.

"This fish weren't dead because it was caught by fishermen," Odi finally spoke, but he still looked at the red grouper he was holding. In fact, he took back several other fish, trying to make sure whether the cause of the death of the fish was due to poisons (Insan, 2019:26).

Based on these data above, it can be seen that Odi is a person who has an awareness of something odd that occur in the marine and their environment. His awareness increasingly made him want to know the cause of the death of the fish as a source of their income. It affected the number of fish they caught. Besides, the human behavior that utilized prohibited tools to catch fish in large numbers caused Odi to increasingly believe that this was because of the human activities that are far from the preservation of nature so that the economic aspects can continue to run as it should. Catching fish in the sea by using poisons had

exceeded the limit and polluted the habitat of the fish.

The coral reefs damage and sea water pollution can be said to be the result of people's ignorance of the value of natural resources in the long term. It can be interpreted that the perception and attitude of the community towards the marine resources is still low. In general, it can be concluded that the damage to coral reefs and the potential of coastal and marine resources as previously described is mostly caused by human behavior.

Activities, behaviors, and actions of each character can lead us to an understanding of character and nature of the actual character (Sayuti, 2000). The actions of the characters can be defined as a form of interaction between the characters and the environment. These actions are in the form of catching fish using tools that can damage the habitat of fish and coral reefs. In addition, in the *Serdadu Pantai* novel, it is explained that other characters carried out fishing activities using traditional tools to preserve nature. This is shown in the following quote.

Instead of using a big net like a trawler and damaging the sea and coral reefs, I'd rather lose my job! I can earn money by joining other fishing boats, or fishing in a canoe and selling it in the market!" said Mr. Odi with sharp eyes (Insan, 2019:11).

This quote above shows the existence of conflicting fishing efforts by the fishermen. From this data, it can be seen that illegal fishing methods are still practiced. This is presented by the author of the novel to raise the awareness of fishermen so as not to always use illegal methods in catching fish for the sake of the sustainability of the marine biota ecosystem and prevent the acceleration of the decline in the number of fish. The character of Zaadi or Mr. Odi in the *Serdadu Pantai* novel is enough to show the contrast between different mindsets as a form of ecological awareness. This is further clarified through one of the events that occurred in the novel as follows.

"Hey!! Don't use bombs!" shouted Odi as loudly as he tried to stand on the border of the

canoe, and pointing his paddles, while Surman and I continued to row. We are all furious and angry (Insan, 2019:328).

The author of the *Serdadu Pantai* novel shows how the characters have different ways of thinking in catching fish using bombs. The bombs used in fishing is a destructive tool. The use of bombs in fishing causes long-term damage to marine resources and the environment, especially coral reef ecosystems.

Not all of the fishermen have large motor-powered boats that are capable of fishing and earning high amount of income. This is what causes conflict between fishermen who do not have power and adequate tools. So, they prefer to use fishing methods according to the regulations that have been made by the government as a form of awareness to preserve the sustainability of marine. The characters who have great power tends to prioritize personal interests as presented in the following quote.

"Now, you just have to choose! Do you want to use a large net like a trawler as I order, or I will fire you and you no longer have to work in my fishing boat. Which one do you choose?" Loud shouts were getting louder and louder from *La Maseke's* mouth while pointing at Mr. Odi's face without any respect (Insan, 2019:10).

Fishing with poisons and bombs are common practices and can have a negative impact on coral reef ecosystems. Fishermen have always been considered by various parties as ones who damage the environment, especially coral reefs. Several types of technology that they use to catch fish are not environmentally friendly or damaging to the environment, such as fish bombs and the use of potassium cyanide.

The use of bombs and chemicals by the fishermen to catch fish in the *Serdadu Pantai* novel has been proven to be very damaging to the coral reefs habitat. This occurred due to the lack of supervision from related parties in supervising the activities of the fishermen at the sea. The supervision was only carried out by a few people who had ecological awareness to preserve the sustainability of resources and aesthetics for a long time. It goes hand in hand with the less-than-optimal socialization carried

out by the relevant agencies in providing information about the importance of preserving the environment of the coastal and marine areas.

The phenomenon that has attracted the attention of many parties is that the use of bombs by the fishermen that causes a very significant level of damage to the coral reefs. This problem is illustrated by the author of the novel in the quote below.

“Man!!” there was a slight banging sound and a sea shower appeared. I also just realized if there was a bang before. The sound seemed to have disappeared from our ears because it happened to coincide with the sound of the coconut falling” (Insan, 2019:326).

The existence of potential fish resources is an asset that might be harmed and extinct. The widespread destruction of coral reefs will have a negative impact on the social, economic, and even cultural life of the people who live in harmony and depend on these ecosystems for recreational needs, protection from natural disasters, materials, and the incomes for coastal communities.

It shows that activities that are destructive to the marine environment, such as the use of bombs, will threaten the sustainability of the marine resources. This is what provokes the author to bring the role of literature in developing ecological awareness.

Social and Economic Background

This novel not only tells about marine life, but also a fertile land used to plant guava trees. Serdau Pantai is a beautiful and fertile area for coastal plants. There grow fruit trees that can be utilized by residents. In the residential areas, between the fertile mountainous land from behind the settlements and the beauty of the coastal panorama, the Buton coast is a beauty in itself. The closeness of the main character to the coastal environment forms a thought for the character. A sense of pride and love for the homeland is shown by the author in the form of a story. Although not so much different from his other works, this novel describes the pride that the character has is in an archipelago nuance. *Serdadu Pantai* by the author, through the character Dayan who is a fisherman, describes

how a small plantation has always been a source of pride for the community, "Not many people in this village or that village have plantations like me", (Insan, 2019:80).

Fishermen can be described as individuals who are active in catching fish and other sea animals. The activities of the fishermen greatly influence their level of welfare since it is determined by the number of fish they catch. The greater the number of catches, the greater amount of income they earn. The income will later be used for personal consumption and a source of the economy. Hence, the level of fulfilling the needs of the family is largely determined by the income received from fishing.

In the *Serdadu Pantai* novel by Laode Insan, it is described that humans depend on nature. However, this dependence does not run harmoniously. It is shown that there were fatalities that occurred while sailing for fish in bad weather conditions. This is an example of a complicated representation of the relationship between humans and nature as quoted from the novel *Serdadu Pantai* below.

This time, the residents didn't talk about what fish the fishermen got and how much the price at the market. They were curious to see how the condition of the victim from the overturned boat was, whether they are all safe or not (Insan, 2019:66).

Many people, either consciously or not, treat nature unfairly with exploitation behavior that happens in every region. This is a threat that can damage the balance between humans and nature. One of the causes of exploitation behaviors is due to economic conditions. In this case, they are the fishermen in the novel *Serdadu Pantai* by Laode Insan.

Since the crisis began to spread to certain areas in mid-1997, traditional fishermen are arguably the coastal community groups who have suffered the most and are the first victims of changes in the socio-economic situation that seem sudden but prolonged. Many studies have proven that traditional fishermen are generally poorer than families of farmers, craftsmen, and informal sector workers (Rahim, 2007). This is as stated in the following quote by Odi, “The

economic conditions of my family are indeed poor likewise my three friends and most of the other people” (Insan, 2019:23).

The complexity of the current problem of the fishermen has affected on the declining of their economy. It causes poverty among fishermen and coastal communities. In fact, fishermen are the main source of livelihood in order to meet their daily needs and the needs for their family members.

Losing a job is like a frightening thing for everyone. We are haunted by hunger and our thoughts are filled with questions about the fate of tomorrow. However, at the same time, it becomes a test of faith on whom a person depends on his fate (Insan, 2019:13).

The problems of poverty that befall fishermen make their lives ups and downs. Sudarso (2007) explained that many studies have proven that the structural poverty pressures that plague the lives of traditional fishermen are actually caused by complex factors. In the novel *Serdadu Pantai*, the complexity of the problems that occur in the community is caused by dependence on the natural resources by being more likely to consume marine products than from plantations for the needs of foods. It shows that coastal communities tend to use marine products to survive. Utilization of marine products as a resource tends to damage the environment.

Based on the results of the analysis of the relationship between the environmental damage, such as the damage of coral reef ecosystems and the sea water pollution, and the level of education, work, and income, can be said that they are not harmonious. The condition of coral reefs and sea water in coastal areas in the *Serdadu Pantai* novel by Laode Insan is included in the damaged category of perception value. Thus, it is necessary to solve problems related to environmental management by conducting socialization of nature conservation.

CONCLUSION

There are several important points found from the results and discussion of the research

on ecocriticism in the novel of *Serdadu Pantai* by Laode Insan. Those points are the damage to nature and the environment in the *Serdadu Pantai* novel by Laode Insan are in the form of coral reefs damage and pollution of sea water. Coral reefs damage is described by Laode Insan in the form of coral reefs that are crushed into small fragments. These coral reefs should have a function as food fields for marine biota. Pollution of sea water by Laode Insan is told through the distribution of waste on the coastal areas and the use of chemicals in catching fish that are harmful to marine biota. Coral reefs damage and sea water pollution are caused by the behavior of the community in the *Serdadu Pantai* novel by catching marine animals using tools that damage the habitats such as poisons and homemade bombs with explosive power that can damage resources and the environment in the sea, especially coral reef ecosystems. The social and economic background as a factor of the environmental damage is presented by a social background that lacks education about nature conservation so that it has an impact on long-term environmental damage. In addition, economic problems that depend on marine resources as the main income have created excessive exploitative behavior of the community that cause damage to marine ecosystems.

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