

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The study elaborates on the dualism portrayed in the novel *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy using the theory of Ecofeminism. This chapter contains the background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and scope and limitations of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

In the modern world, oppression persists among various groups, including women and nature. The oppression of women and nature in Indian society is an example. Reshma (2017, p. 174) reveals that the oppression of women and nature in India literature is a considered of social construction born out of power dynamics in a patriarchal society. According to Christ in Weber & Desmond (2008, p. 88) the violence perpetrated by men against women and nature in Africa is the result of a hierarchical dualism based on Western philosophical thinking. Along with that, Gago's term "bodies-territorie" in Vakoch (2022, p. 357) also provides that the subjection of women and nature cannot be separated from the exploitation of colonies by the capitalist Western civilization. It means certain Western philosophical ideas have led to a worldview where men are seen as superior to women and nature, causing violence and exploitation.

On the other hand, women are often considered weak and discriminated against because society often uses a patriarchal framework in all aspects of life i.e. men are more dominant (Jumrah & Karim., 2022, p. 139). In contrast, Youssef (2022, p. 2) declares that nature is always the focus of man's interest, the source of his fear and power, and the object of his gratification. Andhikari (2022, p. 25) also argues that human attitude to nature is largely motivated by self-existence even if they seem to acknowledge the holistic existence of nature. It indicates how dualism in the patriarchal system leads to the oppression of women and nature.

In particular, dualism is a central concept of Western thought, reflecting the main forms of oppression in Western culture. Christ in Weber & Desmond (2008, p. 88) states dualisms inherited from patriarchal Western metaphysics, such as culture/nature, male/female, subject/object, transcendence/humanity, God/world,

human/animal, public/private, and production/reproduction. Plumwood et al (1993, p. 31) state the concept of dualism is central to an understanding of what is problematic in the attempt to reverse the value both of the feminine and nature. It involves the creation of opposing and exclusive concepts, such as masculine and feminine identities, through processes of dominance and subordination. In addition, dualism is a key concept discussed in ecofeminism. Ecofeminism criticizes the dualist hierarchy that makes one element superior to another.

According to Plumwood et al (1993, p. 8) one important feature of all ecological feminist positions is that they give a positive value to women's relationship with nature that in the West was previously given a negative cultural value and became a major basis for the devaluation and oppression of women. Ecological feminists are engaged in a major cultural revolution regarding the status of women, the feminine and the natural, a reassessment that must recognize how their historical relationship in Western culture has influenced the construction of feminine identity. In other words, Goutal & Cholez (2021, p. 1) also argue that ecofeminism is the exploitation of nature and male domination have deep shared roots, and use similar mechanisms such as objectification, devaluation, and violence.

Ecofeminism's critique of dualism is also discussed in the postcolonial ecofeminism study. Asli Degirmenci in "Postcolonial Literature and Ecofeminism" in Vakoch (2022, p. 354) states postcolonial ecofeminism is an analysis of the convergence of postcolonial literature and ecofeminism to identify several issues in the larger context of post-colonialism and environmental studies, as well as a review of postcolonial feminism. She also explains that postcolonial ecofeminism is a critique of ecofeminism in postcolonial literary works where her study discusses dualism, postcolonial feminism, and ecofeminist activism. Furthermore, one of the postcolonial literary works is the novel *The God of Small Things* written by Indian author Arundhati Roy.

Postcolonial ecofeminism is exemplified in Roy's interrogation of development in postcolonial Indian society. Roy's novel, *The God of Small Things*, views the hierarchy of dualisms between men and women, development, and underdevelopment as an ideological justification for domination (Chae, 2015, p.

520). The novel *The God of Small Things* is a book by Arundhati Roy, an Indian writer. The novel received the Booker Prize in 1997, the same year it was published. *The God of Small Things* is also Roy's first book. The book took four years for Roy to complete. It started from 1992-1996 and was published the following year. This novel tells the story of the childhood experiences of twin sisters (Rahel and Estha) and the impact of caste that still exists in India. The novel is set in Ayemenem, a village in Kerala, India. It alternates between two timelines: the childhood of Estha and Rahel in 1969 and their adulthood in 1993.

According to Zaheri & Moosavinia (2019, p. 175), the novel implies that traditional ways of life are changing and women are starting to think differently. The novel deconstructs stereotypical representations of several aspects of Indian family life. Roy's novel also depicts the culture that shaped it, namely rigid interpretations of the scriptures (Vedas), established sexist prejudices, strict family budgets in a society that still privileges dowry, and the belief that Hindu women are part of their husband's family. Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* explores issues of caste, gender, and social conventions in postcolonial India. The novel reveals the rigidity of the dualistic structure that permeates the lives of its characters by deftly piecing together their lives. The dualism is shown by the sharp social boundaries, strict gender norms, and the very different environment of the river and the abandoned historic house.

In this case, the writer analyzes about dualism in the novel *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy. The theory of dualism by Plumwood et al (1993) is used as a powerful lens to explore the theme of dualism. Dualism theory involves the understanding that the polarization between nature and humans, women and men. The theory often leads to oppression and exploitation. Meanwhile, the theory of ecofeminism from Plumwood et al (1993) is used to show the critique and resistance to dualist thinking that leads to the oppression of women and nature. Suman & Poornananda (2022, p. 159) argue ecofeminism in the Indian context shows a strong link with nature. In many regions of the country, nature is seen as sacred, and its elements are worshiped because of a history rich in animism and pagan religious practices.

In outlining the dualism analysis, the writer focuses on analyzing the three female protagonists in the novel (Ammu, Mammachi, and Rahel). The writer explores the experience of oppression and the depiction of exploitation of nature. This analysis focuses on dualistic structures. Furthermore, key aspects such as caste, language, culture, freedom vs. restriction, love vs. violence, and the conflict between nature and urbanization are discussed. Through this exploration, the writer seeks to understand how Arundhati Roy navigates the complex conflicts in India's diverse society in her novel. The ecofeminism approach helps the writer understand how the characters' resistance to dualism exists in the novel *The God of Small Things*.

There are eight previous studies that relate to this study based on data and theory. The first previous study is by Chae (2015), entitled Postcolonial Ecofeminism in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. The study explores the ecofeminist perspective in Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things*. The second previous study is by Jain (2015). The title is Mapping Ecofeminism in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. The study analyzes *The God of Small Things* through the lens of ecofeminist theory and practice. The third previous study is Discourse of the Oppressed: An Ecofeministic Reading of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* by Reshma (2017). The study analysis featured in The Criterion's latest issue, explores the treatment of women and nature in the fictional writings of Indian women writers. Next, the fourth previous study is Gender Inequality and Feminism in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* by Mardiyani & Tawami (2022). The study aims to analyze aspects of feminism and gender imbalance contained in the novel *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy.

The fifth previous study is by Ganguly (2018). The title is Between The Worlds: Gender Discrimination and Feminism in Arundhati Ro's *The God of Small Things*. The study aims to analyze gender discrimination and feminism in the novel *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy. Then, the sixth previous study is A Study of Multiplicity of Oppression and Repressive Structures in *The God of Small Things* by Rehman & Rabbani (2018). The study explores the complexity of oppression experienced by various communities in India, which is based on class,

race, gender, and belief, as discussed in the novel *The God of Small Things* (1997) by Arundhati Roy. The seven previous study is a thesis by Lunga (2020), entitled A Postcolonial Ecofeminist Comparative Analysis of War Fiction: The Case of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The thesis aims to comparatively analyze *The God of Small Things* (1997) by Arundhati Roy and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie from a postcolonial ecofeminist perspective. The Last previous study is by Zaheri & Moosavinia (2019). The title is Feministic Analysis of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* in the Light of Post Colonialism. The analysis explores themes such as history, diaspora, resistance, and the role of women in Indian society.

There are several differences between previous studies and this study. First, the writers of previous studies use different theories. In previous studies, the topic of oppression was analyzed using ecofeminist theory, feminism theory, gender inequality theory, and oppression theory. Meanwhile, in this study, the oppression and exploitation of nature are analyzed using dualism theory. Second, this study uses ecofeminism theory to analyze the resistance performed by the characters against dualism in the novel *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy. The topic of resistance to dualism is not analyzed in previous studies. Therefore, this study needs to be conducted to present the newness where the research is different from the previous studies above.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the elaboration of the background of the study. The writer formulates the research questions as follows:

1. What is the oppression experienced by three female protagonists as an implication of the dualism described in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*?
2. What is the exploitation of nature due to dualism portrayed in *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy?
3. What is resistance to dualism shown in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* through the perspective of ecofeminism?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The research objectives of this study are to portray:

1. The oppression experienced by the female characters as an implication of dualism in *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy.
2. The exploitation of nature due to dualism in the novel *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy.
3. The resistance to dualism in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* through the perspective of ecofeminism.

1.4 Significance of the Study

There are two contributions the writer hopes to provide to the readers through this study. The first is that this study theoretically amplifies dualism theory, which explores the interrelationship of two different entities. The difference between these two entities leads to the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature. In addition, this study also amplifies the ecofeminism theory that criticizes or rejects dualistic thinking.

The second is that this study practically contributes to increasing readers' understanding of the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature due to the dualism in the novel *The God of Small Things*. This study can also provide an understanding of dualism and ecofeminism to readers, especially literature students. They will find out how the existing dualism causes certain groups to experience oppression. In addition, readers can also find out the resistance to dualism explained in ecofeminism to eliminate oppression and exploitation that exists because of dualism.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this study focuses on the use of dualism theory and ecofeminism theory proposed by Plumwood (1993). Theory of dualism use to analyze the oppression and exploitation of nature in *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy. Furthermore, ecofeminism theory use to analyze the resistance to dualistic thinking. However, the limitation of this study is on the character's utterances and the author's narration in the novel to answering the research questions in this study.