

# ***FEMALE'S ISSUES IN CHARACTERIZATION OF INDONESIAN MALAY LITERARY WORKS IN THE ERA from 1920 to 1940***

***(Isu Perempuan dalam Penokohan Karya Sastra Melayu Indonesia pada Periode 1920–1940)***

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**Abstract:** *One of the highlights in Indonesian Malay literary works from 1920 to 1940 is the phenomenon of female's existence in social and cultural perspectives as reflected in twelve selected novels. This article aims to describe the issues of Indonesian Malay women as reflected in a number of literary works from 1920 to 1940, namely Azab dan Sengsara (1920) by Merari Siregar; Sitti Nurbaya (1922) by Marah Rusli; Salah Asuhan (1928) by Abdoel Moeis; Tak Putus Dirdung Malang (1929) by Sutan Takdir Alisyahbana; Sengsara Brings Nikmat (1929) by Tulis Sutan Sati; Karena Mentua (1930) by Nur Sutan Iskandar; Dian Yang Tak Kunjung Padam (1932) by Sutan Takdir Alisyahbana; Kalau Tak Untung (1933) by Selasih; Si Cebol Rindukan Bulan (1934) by Datuk Madjoido; Hilang Mestika (1934) by Fatimah Hasan Delais or Hamidah; Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck (1938) by Hamka; and Layar Berkembang (1938) by Sutan Takdir Alisyahbana. The selected literary works are the main research data analyzed through the integration of the Structural Literary Approach method with Feminist Literary Criticism which emphasizes women's issues in literary structures such as characterization and themes carried by the literary works. The results of the data analysis are then presented descriptively, namely explaining fictional facts as narrated in literary works. The facts obtained from the narratives of Indonesian Malay literature from 1920 – 1940 related to women's issues are the intervention of parents and family in matchmaking, devotion to parents, obedience to customs, maintaining purity/self-honor, true love for the soul/spirituality, marriage partners based on social status, death due to failed lovemaking, uneducated women resigned to domestication, and educated women being resilient in facing life's problems.*

**Keywords:** *Character; Female; Indonesian Malay Literary Works*

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

Humans naturally possess various life tools related to physical, psychological, mental, behavioral, emotional, and other aspects. All of these tools constantly encourage humans to create something in social life. The amazing creative ability of humans shows that they have an advantage over other creatures of God. Humans are able to create things that other creatures cannot create, such as language, literature, buildings, technology, science, ideas, creativity, and so on. Specifically in literary creation, humans demonstrate their existence as humanistic beings who feel, think, imagine, are knowledgeable, and develop. Faruk (2014) calls literature a social fact as well as a human fact that is imaginatively reconstructed by the author from the surrounding situation. The uniqueness of literature is that it becomes a space for imaginary communication between humans with other

humans, animals, trees, nature, and so on, as a medium for education, criticism, rebellion, entertainment, documentation of events, and so on. This imaginary communication contains various partial and universal issues in social life such as injustice, slavery, racism, gender discrimination, sexual violence, and so on.

Female are a typical gender that has always been a phenomenology in human life on this earth. Female's issues are raised in various discourses such as religion, beliefs, politics, law, ideology, social movements, literature, and so on. In literary discourse, women's issues are dominated by the existence of gender relations between women and men in cultural spaces, rituals, sociology, language, and others that create imaginations of violence, discrimination, injustice, equality, romance, matchmaking, marriage, households, and so on. Female's issues in literary discourse can be said to be a universal phenomenon because they are present in literary products in any ethnography such as in Asia, Africa, America, Australia, Europe, and the Middle East. One group of literary products that is interesting to study is the works of Malay-Indonesian literature that inhabit the Southeast Asian region, especially the Indonesian archipelago.

The Malay ethnography and ethnoculture of the Indonesian archipelago hold riches in the birth of great civilizations, especially language and literature. Malay is the forerunner of the national language of Indonesia, which since 2023 has been designated as an international language by the United Nations body, namely UNESCO (United Nations on Education, Social, and Culture Organization). Malay is also the mother tongue of Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and Singapore. Malay is one of the identities of the countries of the same family, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and Singapore. Besides language, Malay is also rich in literary productivity called Malay Literature. Abadi, et al. (1979) stated that Malay literature is a literary product that uses Malay as a medium for the author's imaginary narrative. This research focuses on Indonesian Malay Literature, namely a number of literary products whose main setting is the island of Sumatra. The physical setting of this island stretches from the southern tip to the northern tip, including Lampung, Palembang, Bangka Island, Bengkulu, Riau, Padang, Padangpanjang, Padang Sidempuan, Bukittinggi, Pariaman, Solok, Tapanuli, Medan, and Aceh Darussalam. Other physical settings are found on the islands of Java, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, and others. The Sumatra region is believed to be part of the growth and development of Malay culture and literature which is currently part of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. In this study, literary works such as romances and novels written by writers from Sumatra and taking their stories as set in this region are categorized as Indonesian Malay Literature products. Then literary products born in the regions of Penang, Johor, Selangor, Kelantan, and other places in Malaysia are called Malaysian Malay Literature, literary works that appeared in Brunei Darussalam are considered Brunei Malay Literature. Similarly, literary works born in Singapore are grouped as Singapore Malay Literature.

Indonesian Malay literature is a collection of literary products that have typical themes, narratives, aesthetic structures, extra-aesthetic structures, language styles, norms, social, and others that differ from one another. These differences create certain characteristics or distinctive features among literary products and authors which are used as the basis for literary experts to determine the history and periodization of Indonesian literature. Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa (The Language Development and Fostering Agency) (2024) describes various models of periodization of Indonesian literature from several experts in the history of Indonesian language and literature, including H.B. Jasin, Buyung Saleh, Nugroho Notosusanto, Bakri Siregar, Ajip Rosidi, Zuber Usman, and Rachmat Djoko Pradopo. Based on the explanations of these literary experts, it can be concluded that in general the periodization of Indonesian Literature can be grouped into several periods, namely the Balai Pustaka Period (1920-1940), the Pujangga Baru Period (1930-1945), the 45th Generation Period (1940-1955), the 1950s Generation Period (1950-1970), the 1970s Generation Period (1970-1986), and subsequent periods. The research object of this article is focused on the collection of Malay literature in the archipelago during the period 1920-1940 which is categorized as the Balai Pustaka Generation Period and the Pujangga Baru Period. The rational thinking background in determining the literary period studied is the strength of its literary narrative in documenting the natural values of spirituality, morality, and culture in Indonesian Malay society in the archipelago.

One typical theme and imaginary narrative that consistently emerged in Indonesian Malay literature from the 1920s to 1940s was the existence of female amidst spiritual, moral, and cultural turmoil. Abbas (2020) describes the typical Malay woman in Indonesia as a female who adheres to tradition, bound by a conservative interpretation of Islamic spiritual values. In literary narratives, they are generally depicted as traditional women devoted to domestication within the family and domestic life. They have no choice in expressing their freedom and desires except to submit their fate to tradition and customs. Based on the idea that Indonesian Malay females are documented in the imaginary narrative of literature of the Balai Pustaka and Pujangga Baru periods as conservative traditional females who are different from other literary periods, the researcher in this article formulated the research title, namely female's Issues in the characterization of Indonesian Malay Literary Works 1920 - 1940. This research aims to describe the issues of Indonesian Malay females as social documentation of the archipelago society as reflected in a number of selected literary works of the 1920 to 1940 period. The benefits obtained in this research are the enrichment of references and information on the presence of typical Indonesian Malay females in the narrative of Indonesian literature in the 1920 to 1940 era. The scientific method used in this research is the integration of the Structural Literary Approach method with Feminist Literary Criticism which emphasizes women's issues in literary structures such as characterization and themes carried by literary works.

## **B. METHOD**

This research is a literary research based on feminist analysis, so the method used is procedural literary methodology, namely the Structural Approach and Feminist Literary Criticism. Both literary methodologies are used in examining twelve novels which are selected literary works of Malay Indonesia period 1920-1940. The research method section is narrated in four parts, namely Indonesian Malay Literature 1920 to 1940, Structural Approach to Literature, Feminist Literary Criticism, and finally the Research Framework which explains the stages of the research. These stages integrate the Structural Approach to Literature with Feminist Literary Criticism in analyzing twelve selected literary works of Malay Indonesia period 1920-1940.

### **1. Indonesian Malay Literature 1920-1940**

Literature written in Malay by Indonesian writers is categorized by researchers in this article as Indonesian Malay Literature. Then the selected literature studied is the era of 1920 to 1940 when the name of the archipelago was still the Dutch East Indies, but the name Indonesia was later officially used as a national identity after being agreed upon in the Youth Pledge declaration on October 28, 1928 in Batavia or Jakarta, namely one nation, one homeland, and one language is Indonesia. Thus, Indonesian Malay Literature 1920-1940 in this study is a number of literary works written in Indonesian which is a Malay language group by Indonesian writers in a certain literary period with distinctive characteristics in several aspects of literature.

In the history of Indonesian literature, the 1920 to 1940 era, according to Ahmad (1967) and Abadi et al. (1979), falls into two important periods in Indonesian Malay Literature, namely the Balai Pustaka Generation and the Pujangga Baru Generation. The origin of the name Balai Pustaka was actually an indigenous educational institution founded on August 15, 1908, by the Commissie voor de Volkslectuur under the auspices of *the Departement van Onderwijs en Eeredienst* or the Department of Education and Religious Affairs of the Dutch East Indies Colonial Government. This institution was under the auspices of *the Adviseur voor Inlandsch Zaken* or the Native Advisory Bureau. According to Swantoro (2016), on the initiative of literary figures and the national movement, this institution was transformed into the People's Reading Commission or known as Balai Pustaka on September 17, 1917 and then officially September 22, 1917 was made as its founding day. Balai Pustaka is specifically a native-owned institution that manages publishing, printing, and multimedia meeting spaces. The primary goal of Balai Pustaka's founding was to develop regional languages in the Dutch East Indies or Indonesia and to foster the reading interest of indigenous people in Indonesian. This language is used as a medium to stimulate imaginary thoughts expressed in literary products. The emergence of this goal was motivated by the desire to open narrative spaces for the national movement through language and literature. As it developed, Balai Pustaka was able to publish around 350 titles per year in the fields of dictionaries, language, literature, law,

social studies, politics, economics, religion, skills, counseling, and reference books. One literary work considered a masterpiece of Balai Pustaka literature is the 1922 novel *Siti Nurbaya* by Marah Rusli. Balai Pustaka also worked on establishing libraries, reading gardens, providing reading loan services, and publishing Malay-language magazines.

Three writers, namely Armijn Pane, Amir Hamzah, and Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana met in September 1932 and initiated the establishment of the Pujangga Baru magazine which collected nationalist writings in the form of literature, culture, language, ideological thoughts, national ideas, and others. Pujangga Baru magazine was first published in July 1933 which was entirely managed by indigenous people without affiliation with the Dutch East Indies Colonial Government. According to Foulcher (1991), the name Pujangga Baru for this magazine was intended to develop modern thoughts as a renewal of the times that differed from old or classical thought patterns. The renewal of the times or modern are ideas about new cultures that support national awareness and create a spirit of nationalism. At the beginning of its establishment, the main goal of Pujangga Baru was to advance literature and modernize the Malay language into the National language of Indonesia in developing culture, art, and social aspects of the nation. In its development, women's emancipation was also included in the discourse of the Pujangga Baru magazine, such as the ideas of Raden Ajeng Kartini and the idea of advanced women. Pujangga Baru involved many figures from different backgrounds such as writers, linguists, politicians, intellectuals, community leaders, and so on. They were Ki Hadjar Dewantara, Hoessein Djajadiningrat, Sumadang, Amir Sjarifuddin, Mohamad Sjah, Sugiarti, and others. Pujangga Baru, which was considered a space that discussed and initiated the future of Indonesian culture and national identity, was finally accepted by all circles, both political and non-political parties. The progress achieved by Pujangga Baru by the Dutch colonialists and Japanese imperialists was considered dangerous to the continuation of colonial power so it was closed in March 1942. Although Pujangga Baru was closed, three years later, precisely on August 17, 1945, its dream was realized through the Proclamation of Indonesian Independence which marked the birth of a new nation, a new culture, and a new modern life. According to Jassin (1963), one of the masterpieces of the Pujangga Baru Period is the novel *Layar Terkembang* by Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana in 1938 and the novel *Belenggu* by Armijn Pane in 1940.

Balai Pustaka and Pujangga Baru have made a significant contribution in promoting the existence of literature and language, which became the national identity of the Indonesian nation, which was still struggling with Dutch colonialism and continued with Japanese imperialism. It must be acknowledged that Indonesian, which became the national language, has its roots in the Malay language family and has also absorbed other Indonesian languages. The similarity of cultural ideas and the nationalist spirit that was built is also based on the fact that Balai Pustaka figures, some of whom were also the founders of Pujangga Baru. According to Yudiono (2010), behind the similarity of spirit and goals being fought for, Balai Pustaka and Pujangga Baru still have different ways and

styles in fighting for the future of the Indonesian nation, which at that time was still colonized through the lines of struggle for literature, language, and social life. Balai Pustaka uses a cooperative method that wants to combine Eastern (Indonesian) and Western (European) culture as the future culture of the Indonesian nation. On the other hand, the Pujangga Baru moved radically by utilizing the heterogeneity of Indonesian culture as a representation of Eastern culture to be unified into a new Indonesian culture that was considered modern and free from the shadow of Western culture as a colonial product. Indonesia's future culture was imagined as a modern culture that grew and developed from the products of the Indonesian archipelago's ethnic entities.

## **2. Structural Literary Approach**

Literature is a product of human imagination built from structures as intrinsic elements of literary works. Literary structures are a major part of literary narratives that express the meaning and message of the author. Interpretation of meaning in structures is the basis of understanding to continue literary analysis in other aspects such as sociology, literary genetics, author biography, and others. Endraswara (2013) suggests that literary products are born as natural symptoms of social phenomena absorbed by the author and then described in the structures of literary works. Each part of the structure in literature is a combination of meanings from other parts, such as the meaning of characterization cannot ignore the existence of theme, setting, plot, style, diction, atmosphere, and so on. Recognition of the meaning in these literary structures is the main basis for the emergence of the Structural Literary Approach principle which is described in various literary research methods based on the intrinsic nature of literary works.

The structural approach in literary analysis is a conventional literary research method converted from the study of language structure and equated with the scientific thinking of Ferdinand de Saussure, a world-renowned French linguistics expert from the Prague Linguistic Circle. His basic idea is that literature has a structure, just as language also has linguistic structures called *langue* and *parole*. *Langue* is the language system, while *parole* is the actions of the language speaker. Wellek (2014) states that if language contains linguistic signs, then in literature, such as poetry, figurative language is also found. Literary works are filled with abstract symbols of language structure, thus requiring the power of interpretation. Structure in literature can be said to be a very important element as a guide to explore other aspects such as norms, values, aesthetics, style, mode, variety, and so on.

Structural aspects of literature that are also seen as intrinsic elements include everything related to the internal situation of literature such as character, plot, setting, theme, point of view, atmosphere, figurative language, and others. According to Teeuw (1988), categories, genres, models, and forms of literature are determined by the form of its internal situation known as intrinsic elements. In relation to prose, the researcher in this article only explains the internal situation of literature which includes character, plot,

setting, and theme. Characters as the driving force of the narrative occupy a strategic position because imaginary events can be formed by the interactions and actions of these characters. The strategic position of fictional characters includes main characters and supporting characters. Main characters are characters who drive the story as a whole and are present from the beginning to the end of the story, while supporting characters are partially present in the story in certain events. Then the role of characters is divided into three parts, namely protagonist, antagonist, and tritagonist. Protagonist is a character who plays a role in good, antagonist plays a role in evil, and tritagonist has a dual role in both good and evil. A plot is a series of stories arranged in a specific pattern, such as forward, backward, and mixed. A forward plot is a series of stories that tell events from beginning to end in sequence. A backward plot is a series of stories that retell events or flashbacks from a previous period. A mixed plot is a series of stories that combine forward and backward plots. A theme is the message and moral messages that the author conveys in a literary work to be interpreted by readers, researchers, and literary connoisseurs.

The view that literature consists of a number of interwoven structures that constructs meaning has given rise to a literary research model called the Structural Literary Approach. This approach, as previously explained, is a collection of intrinsic literary research methods that view literary works as imaginary works constructed from structures. Literary structures are not merely imaginary narratives, but rather a synergy of meaning within a literary work

### **3. Feminist Literary Criticism**

Literary narratives are driven by the presence of two genders as characters in the story, namely male and female. The presence of male and female in literature makes gender relations issues an unavoidable fact in literary narratives. As long as literary narratives contain male and female characters, then whatever the genre and theme presented, such as adventure, war, horror, detective, fighting, forced marriage, hedonism, materialism, and so on, female's issues remain a unique phenomenon in gender relations narratives. Phenomena of women's inferiority in gender relations in literary narratives can take the form of discriminatory actions, violence, oppression, injustice, coercion, rape, murder, and so on. Djajanegara (2000) argues that the fact that women are always placed in a lower position than men in the domestic and public worlds in literary narratives is one of the backgrounds for the emergence of feminism as a focus in literary analysis. The literary view that depicts this gender inequality in the inferiority of female's position encourages readers' awareness and literary researchers to assess the role and position of women in literary works.

Feminism and literature are two fields that each has their own essence and existence. Feminism is a social fact that exists as a women's movement, while literature is an imaginative product that exists as a reflection of human life. Humm (2007) argues that feminism is both an ideology and a women's movement built on a deep awareness of the

need for women's human rights that are just as they are enjoyed by men in domestic and public life. On the other hand, literature, as Ratna (2015) argues, is a cultural product expressed through imaginative creativity adopted from social facts. Although feminism and literature are two different fields of knowledge, they share a common character, namely they both fall into the category of interdisciplinary and even multidisciplinary knowledge. This similarity in character within one category forms the basis for connecting feminism and literature in a single scientific research method called feminist literary criticism. Abbas (2024) stated that feminism as a concept of thought and ideology that is the basic principles of feminist literary criticism is a very complex topic to discuss because of the various attitudes and views that assess it, the many experts who highlight it, the various scientific backgrounds of researchers who analyze it, the many theories that are integrated into it, the many languages that define it, the various ideologies that adopt it, and so on.

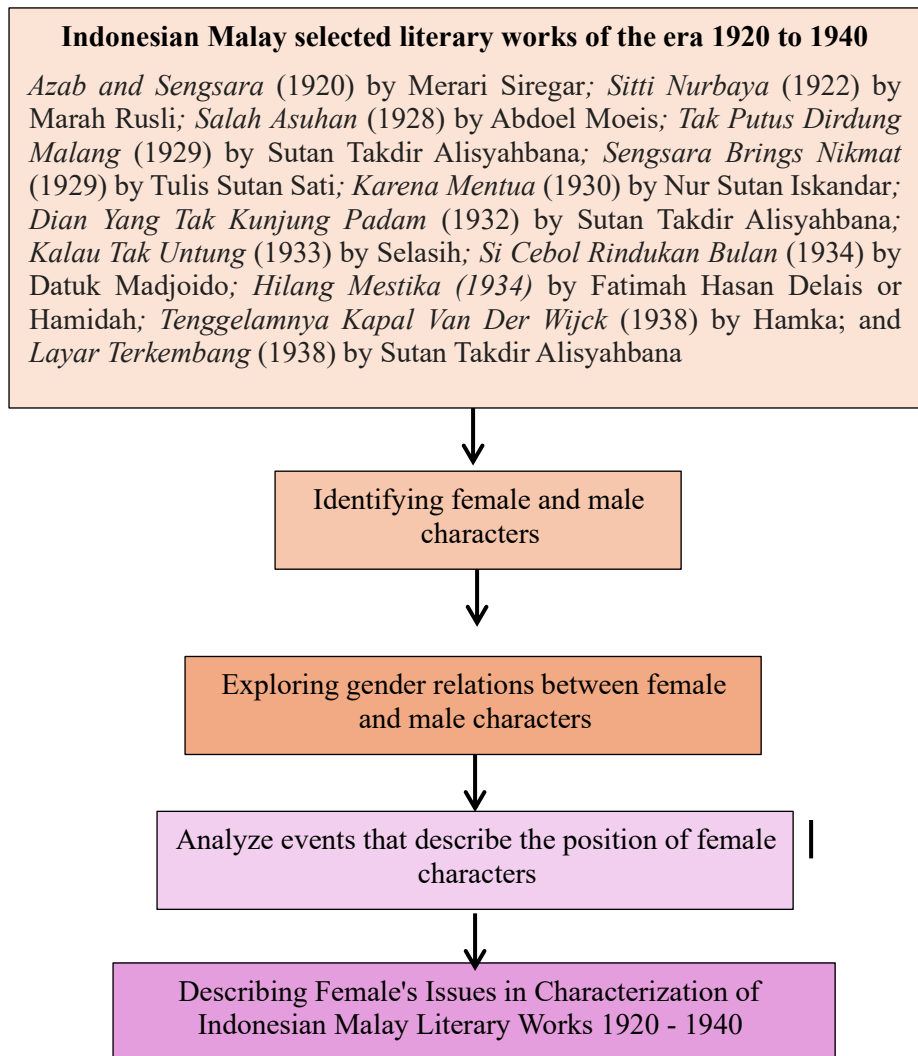
Sugihastuti and Suharto (2016) explain that feminist literary criticism is a perspective that analyzes perceptions of the patriarchal system in literary discourse that places women in a marginalized position. Ratna (2015) then describes feminist literary criticism as a women's movement that highlights the presence of women in literary narratives. The marginalization and subordination of women, degraded by culture and documented in literature, must be analyzed and described to build a just awareness of gender relations between female and male. Based on all explanations related to the position of feminism and literature in an integrated scientific research, the researchers in this article conclude that feminist literary criticism is a literary research model that specifically highlights the social conditions of women in literary narratives.

#### **4. Research Framework**

This research is categorized as a structural literary research based on feminist issues, namely female's narratives in literary discourse. The focus of the research is female's narratives in Indonesian Malay culture which are reflected in twelve selected literary works from the 1920-1940 era. These literary works, which in the history of Indonesian literature are literary products in two periods, namely Balai Pustaka Generation Literature and Pujangga Baru Generation Literature. The literary works as the main objects of this research data include the novel *Azab and Sengsara* written in 1920 by Merari Siregar; *Sitti Nurbaya* written in 1922 by Marah Rusli; *Salah Asuhan* written in 1928 by Abdoel Moeis; *Tak Putus Dirundung Malang* written in 1929 by Sutan Takdir Alisyahbana; *Sengsara Membawa Nikmat* written in 1929 by Tulis Sutan Sati or Hamidah; *Karena Mentua* written in 1930 by Nur Sutan Iskandar; *Dian Yang Tak Kunjung Padam* was written in 1932 by Sutan Takdir Alisyahbana; *Kalau Tak Untung* written in 1933 by Selasih; *Si Cebol Rindukan Bulan* written in 1934 by Datuk Madjoido; *Kehilangan Mestika* written in 1934 by Fatimah Hasan Delais or Hamidah; *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck* written in 1938 by Hamka; and *Layar Terkembang* written in 1938 by Sutan Takdir Alisyahbana.

The research data documentation was obtained from twelve selected literary works from the 1920s to 1940s. The research data were analyzed and then described as research findings. The stages of this research, which integrate the Structural Literary Approach and Feminist Literary Criticism, are collaborated with explanations of literary research methods proposed by Endraswara (2013), Ratna (2015), Sugihastuti and Suharto (2016). These stages can be seen in the conceptual framework diagram below. Based on the conceptual framework diagram below, the stages of this research include:

- a. Comprehensive reading of twelve works of Indonesian Malay literature in the form of selected novels from 1920-1940 consisting of *Azab and Sengsara* (1920) by Merari Siregar; *Sitti Nurbaya* (1922) by Marah Rusli; *Salah Asuhan* (1928) by Abdoel Moeis; *Tak Putus Dirdung Malang* (1929) by Sutan Takdir Alisyahbana; *Sengsara Brings Nikmat* (1929) by Tulis Sutan Sati; *Karena Mentua* (1930) by Nur Sutan Iskandar; *Dian Yang Tak Kunjung Padam* (1932) by Sutan Takdir Alisyahbana; *Kalau Tak Untung* (1933) by Selasih; *Si Cebol Rindukan Bulan* (1934) by Datuk Madjoido; *Hilang Mestika* (1934) by Fatimah Hasan Delais or Hamidah; *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck* (1938) by Hamka; and *Layar Terkembang* (1938) by Sutan Takdir Alisyahbana;
- b. Identifying female and male characters in eleven selected works of Indonesian Malay literature from 1920-1940;
- c. Explore gender relations between female and male characters in eleven selected works of Indonesian Malay literature from 1920-1940;
- d. Analyze events that describe the position of female characters as a background in describing women's issues in literary works;
- e. Describe women's issues in the characterization of Indonesian Malay literary works 1920 – 1940 as a result of research.



**Figure 1. Framework for Research Stages on Female's Issues in Characterization of Indonesian Malay Literary Works 1920 - 1940**

***C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION***

The twelve literary works selected for analysis from the 1920s to 1940s are Indonesian Malay literary works set in physical and social settings in Indonesia, such as the islands of Sumatra, Java, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, and others. In general, these literary works narrate social situations within a society that firmly upholds conservative values and the strength of ethnic entities. These values are built on a steadfast adherence to ritual traditions, cultural strength, and beliefs in Islamic spiritual teachings. This adherence to ritual traditions encompasses wedding rites, death rites, customary procedures, and so on. Cultural strength encompasses obedience, propriety, ethics, and so on. Belief in Islamic spiritual teachings is a deep fanaticism that underlies traditional and cultural practices, such as the establishment of male and female gender roles in social life.

The presence of women in ritual traditions, cultural power, and beliefs in Islamic spiritual teachings throughout the narratives of twelve selected Malay Indonesian literary works from 1920-1940 show various interesting phenomena to be explored as social issues for women. These issues include parental and family intervention in matchmaking, devotion to parents, adherence to customs, maintaining virginity/self-honor, true love for the soul/spirituality, marriage based on social status, death due to failed lovemaking, uneducated female resigning to full domestication, and educated female being resilient in facing life's problems.

## **1. Parental and Family Intervention in Matchmaking**

Parents are always involved in the matchmaking of their sons and daughters. All fictional female characters are matched in the story not with their lovers, but with other men desired by their parents and family. This phenomenon is found in the novels *Azab dan Sengsara*, *Karena Mentua*, *Dian Tak Kunjung Padam*, *Si Cebol Rindukan Bulan*, and *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck*. Siregar (2011) in the novel *Azab dan Sengsara* narrates Mariamin who had promised to become Aminuddin's wife, but the decisions of their respective parents thwarted this wish. Baginda Diatas and his wife married their son, Aminuddin, to a woman with the surname Siregar. On the other hand, Mariamin was married to Kasibun, a jealous old man who suffered from a skin disease.

Arranged marriages forced by parents are also found in the novel *Karena Mentua*. Iskandar (2011) narrates Ramalah and Marah Adil who were previously husband and wife, but finally separated because of the wishes of Mak Guna, Ramalah's mother. Alisyahbana (2011) in the novel *Dian Tak Kunjung Padam* tells the story of Molek who fell in love with Yasin, and was finally forced to marry Sayid Mustafa at the will of Raden Mahmud, Molek's father. Similarly, Madjoido (2004) tells the story of Patimah and Didong in the novel *Si Cebol Rindukan Bulan* who failed to continue their love to marriage because Si Cebol, Patimah's father, arranged her marriage to a rich man, Sutan Ajis. Zainuddin in *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck* is described by Hamka (2014) as failing to marry his lover, Hayati because her family married her to another man named Azis. The narrative of a couple's failed marriage due to interference from family and traditional institutions is also narrated in several other novels from the era of from 1920 to 1940.

## **2. Devotion to Parents**

In order to please her parents or save them from the clutches of life's pressures, such as debt, a daughter is willing to give up her romantic relationship with her lover and follow her parents' wishes to be matched with the man of their parents' choice. Several literary works narrate this phenomena, such as the novels *Sitti Nurbaya*, *Dian Tak Kunjung Padam*, *Azab dan Sengsara*, and others. Rusli (2006) narrates the fictional character Sitti Nurbaya, who is forced to forget her lover Samsulbahri, who is currently studying

medicine in Batavia. She is forced to accept Datu Meringgih, who is old and has many wives, as her husband. Sitti Nurbaya's decision to accept this bitter reality is due to pity for her father, Baginda Sulaiman, who is imprisoned for being unable to repay his debt to Datuk Meringgih. As a devoted daughter, Sitti Nurbaya obeys her parents' wishes to marry Datu Meringgih.

Alisyahbana (2011) in the novel *Dian Tak Kunjung Padam* tells Molek finally accepts her father's wish, Raden Mahmud, to marry Sayid Mustafa as a form of devotion to her parents. Although Molek tries various ways to be able to live with her lover, Yasin, all her efforts are in vain and finally she is married to the man chosen by her father, namely a young man of Arab descent named Sayid Mustafa. Siregar (2011) through the novel *Azab dan Sengsara* reveals Mariamin who follows her mother's wish to marry an old man named Kasibuan as a sign of devotion to her mother.

### **3. Adherence to Customs**

Generally, the narratives of Indonesian Malay literature from the Balai Pustaka and Pujangga Baru eras depict women's obedience to customs and traditions, as narrated in the novels *Sitti Nurbaya*, *Salah Asuhan*, *Karena Mentua*, *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck*, and others. Rusli (2006) in the novel *Sitti Nurbaya* expresses the fate of Sitti Nurbaya who was made the young wife of an old man who already had several wives. In the Minangkabau Malay tradition, men are given space and freedom to practice polygamy, and women are expected to obey the tradition. Women can be used as a means of paying off debts, as experienced by Sitti Nurbaya. Similarly, Moeis (2010) in the novel *Salah Asuhan* tells the story of a young girl named Rapih who appears to be persistent in defending the noble teachings of Minangkabau customs and traditions in response to the thoughts of a Western-educated young man named Hanafi who wants to reposition tradition.

Iskandar (2011) in *Karena Mentua* narrates Ramalah as a woman who remains faithful to her husband named Marah Adil as part of her steadfastness to traditional customs. Hamka (2014) in the story *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck* tells the story of Hayati who pretends to reject the love of a young man named Zainuddin to show her obedience to traditional customs, even though her heart also loves Zainuddin. The matrilineal Minangkabau traditional rules emphasize that the lineage as a Minangkabau is taken from the mother's line, not the father's. Zainuddin's father, Pendekar Sutan, is Minangkabau and his mother is Makassarese, so he is still considered Makassarese, not Minangkabau. His father's background is one of the reasons the Minangkabau people reject Zainuddin's proposal to Hayati. In Minangkabau tradition, arranged marriages are prioritized between women and men who are from the same Minangkabau ethnic community.

#### 4. Maintaining Virginity/Self-honor

One of the highest measures of a woman's honor is her ability to maintain her chastity (virginity) before marriage. This belief is found in a number of novels such as *Si Cebol Rindukan Bulan*, *Tak Putus Dirundung Malang*, and others. This belief led Madjoido (2004) to present the female character Patimah in *Si Cebol Rindukan Bulan* as fiercely defending her honor when Sutan Ajis attempted to rape her during a tour of the city of Pariaman. Patimah chose Didong over her heart even though he was poor and innocent because he always protected Patimah's chastity. Didong even fought with Sutan Ajis when he attempted to rape Patimah.

Alisjahbana (1986) in the novel *Tak Putus Dirundung Malang* tells the story of a female character named Laminah who considers her virginity a matter of honor and self-respect as a woman. Laminah decides to end her life by jumping into the Bengkulu Sea, which is known for its fierce waves. She feels worthless and has lost her honor when Darwis raped her a few days earlier, thus taking her virginity before marriage. In the novel, Darwis, a former contract laborer, has long wanted to take Laminah's purity, but has been prevented by Laminah's older brother, Mansur. When Mansur is imprisoned, Darwis immediately vents his depraved lust on Laminah and rapes her.

#### 5. True Love for the Soul/Spirituality

Almost all the characters who weave love in a number of Indonesian Malay literary works from 1920 to 1940 never united in marriage, but their pure love remains eternal in each other's souls. This phenomenon can be found in a number of novels such as *Sitti Nurbaya*, *Dian Yang Tak Kunjung Padam*, *Azab dan Sengsara*, *Kalau Tak Untung*, *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck*, *Karena Mentua*, and others. Rusli (2006) in the novel *Sitti Nurbaya* tells the true love between Sitti Nurbaya and Samsulbahri that remains eternal in their souls, even though the two did not succeed in becoming husband and wife. A similar phenomena is also found in the novel *Dian Yang Tak Kunjung Padam* as told by Alisyahbana (2011) that Molek and Yasin still keep their love in their souls, even though Molek is already married to Sayid Mustafa. Selasih (2011) tells the story of Rasmani and Masrul in *Kalau Tak Untung* who were ultimately not destined to be husband and wife, even though the two still love each other.

In the novel *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck*, Hayati and Zainuddin have a true love affair, but Hayati is eventually married to Azis. Hamka (2014) expresses the power of love in the souls of Hayati and Zainuddin until both of them die. Hayati dies due to the sinking of the Van der Wijk ship and Zainuddin dies because of regret for not marrying Hayati. In another phenomenon, Iskandar (2011) in the novel *Karena Mentua* tells the eternal love of Ramalah and Marah Adil, even though they have divorced because of the wishes of Ramalah's mother, Mak Guna.

## 6. Sosial Marriage based on Social Status

The desire of respected and wealthy parents for their daughters is to find a partner from a man who is of equal or even higher social standing. This desire is intended to maintain the family's status and self-esteem in the midst of social interaction. This phenomenon can be found in a number of literary narratives, including the novels *Dian Tak Kunjung Padam*, *Si Cebol Rindukan Bulan*, *Karena Mentua*, and others. Alisyahbana (2011) in the novel *Dian Tak Kunjung Padam* describes Raden Mahmud who forces his daughter, Molek, to marry Sayid Mustafa because he believes Sayid's title indicates that he is a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, a holy and pious person. However, in the end, this marriage does not bring happiness because Sayid Mustafa marries Molek not out of love, but rather to drain Molek and her family's wealth.

Madjoido (2004) in his novel *Si Cebol Rindukan Bulan* narrates the tendency of poor families to want their daughters to get husbands from rich, noble, and respected circles. This desire is intended to elevate the family's status in society. Si Cebol has a daughter named Patimah and hopes he can find a match with a higher social standing. He is very happy when Sutan Ajis likes to visit his house because he hopes Sutan Ajis likes his daughter. Si Cebol always fantasizes how wonderful it would be if his son-in-law were Sutan Ajis who is young, rich, and noble. Si Cebol believes that by having Sutan Ajis as his son-in-law, his descendants and family status will also rise to nobility. A similar phenomenon is also found in the novel *Karena Mentua*. Iskandar (2011) describes a mother who is ambitious for her daughter to get a husband with a higher social standing. Mak Guna encourages her daughter, Ramalah, to divorce her husband, Marah Adil, and find another man who is rich and dignified. When Marah Adil tries his luck in Lampung, Mak Guna encourages the rich Sutan Taib to lure Ramalah. Mak Guna's wish failed, she then influenced her rich friend, Mak Amin, to take Ramalah's daughter-in-law to marry her son, Ramli.

## 7. Death due to Failed Lovemaking

A very interesting phenomenon because love that never unites in marriage results in almost all female fictional characters ending in death. This reality is reflected in female characters in a number of literary works such as the novels *Sitti Nurbaya*, *Azab Membawa Sengsara*, *Tak Putus Dirundung Malang*, *Dian Yang Tak Kunjung Padam*, *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck*, and others. Rusli (2006) describes the fate of the character Sitti Nurbaya who is sickly until she dies because she suppresses her unrequited love for her lover, Samsulbahri. Similarly, the situation of Mariamin in *Azab Membawa Sengsara* is narrated by Siregar (2011) as a female character who ends in death. Mariamin falls ill because her heart is very miserable not having a husband to her lover named Aminuddin, but instead is married to Kasibun who often tortures her.

Alisjahbana (1986) in the novel *Tak Putus Dirundung Malang* tells the story of the death of a female character named Laminah who ends her life by jumping into the Bengkulu sea, which is known for its fierce waves. She made the desperate decision to end her life after going through a series of tragic events in her life and she was not destined to marry her lover. In another novel, Alisjahbana (2011) in the novel *Dian Yang Tak Kunjung Padam* narrates Molek's death as a sickly woman who dies because she fails to marry the man who loves her deeply, Yasin. She experiences physical and mental suffering due to thinking about her unfortunate fate with a husband, Sayyid Mustafa, who only wants to drain her wealth. Hamka (2014) shows the tragic fate of a female character named Hayati in the novel *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck*. She dies with her eternal love in her mind and heart for her lover, Zainuddin. The two never get to marry as husband and wife because Hayati is forced to marry another man named Azis.

## **8. Uneducated Female Resigning to Full Domestication**

Traditional females who do not have the opportunity to receive higher formal education tend to surrender their entire lives to a life of complete domesticity. The phenomenon of females who live as wives and mothers to their children in a home environment can be found in a number of novels such as *Sengsara Membawa Nikmat*, *Dian Yang Tak Kunjung Padam*, *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck*, and others. Sati (2008) in the novel *Sengsara Membawa Nikmat* describes Halimah as the wife of a Dutch East Indies colonial official named Midun who fully carries out the role and duties of a housewife, namely as a wife and as a mother to her children. Midun comes from Minangkabau, while Halimah is a Sundanese woman.

Molek in the novel *Dian Yang Tak Kunjung Padam* shows her full domestic capacity as Sayid Mustafa's wife, even though she is unhappy in her household life. Alisjahbana (2011) depicts Molek as a wife who carries out traditional tasks such as cooking, washing, cleaning the house, arranging the yard, and so on. Similarly, in the novel *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck*, Hamka (2014) shows a female character named Hayati who plays herself as Azis's wife who carries out full domestic roles in household life and the family environment

## **9. Educated Female Being Resilient in Facing Life's Problems**

Literary works emerging in the late 1930s began to depict educated females who differed from traditional females. Educated females developed a rational awareness in repositioning their position in social circles, namely by combining their potential in public circles with responsibilities in domestic life. They were active in public circles, such as actively participating in organizations, giving speeches, and fighting for the advancement of women. They did not deny marriage as the natural right of married women, but said that marriage should be built on common sense, not coercion. With rational awareness and common sense, these educated females were more resilient in facing life's challenges

than conservative females without formal education. This phenomenon can be found in literary works such as the novel *Layar Terkembang*. Alisyahbana (2000) reflects Tuti as an educated woman who was active in the public sphere, such as becoming the head of a radical women's association called PUTERI SEDAR. The aim of this association was to fight for the enhancement of females' roles in the public sphere and the improvement of females' positions in the domestic sphere. She also actively spoke at various females' forums and nationalist movement organizations to raise awareness of the importance of improving the position of females so they could participate as well as men in liberating the Indonesian nation and advancing the nation in the future. Tuti also did not reject marriage, but said it must be built on sincerity and mutual respect. Tuti eventually married Yusuf, an educated young man who was also active in nationalist organizations. The two were like a boat that unfurled the sails of life as they welcomed a new era and faced life's challenges together.

Educated females began to prioritize their rational powers over the impulses of romantic feelings. With this rational power, females were stronger in facing the waves of life full of trials and challenges. This is reflected in the novel *Hilang Mestika*. Delais or Hamidah (2011) presents a females named Hamidah who is motivated to love the world of education and is resilient in facing many changing circumstances in life. She begins with her love story with Ridhan, who later dies, her romance with Idrus, who also dies, and then her marriage to Rusli and their eventual divorce. After she goes through her miserable marriage, she finally dedicates herself as a teacher and establishes a school as a rational decision. The phenomenon of Tuti in *Layar Terkembang* and Hamidah in *Hilang Mestika* as educated women differs from traditional women who domesticate themselves completely within the family environment and domestic life

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Typical themes and imaginary narratives that consistently emerge in Indonesian Malay literature from the 1920s to 1940s are the existence of females amidst the spiritual, moral, and cultural whirlwinds. Indonesian Malay females are documented in the imaginary narratives of literature from the Balai Pustaka and Pujangga Baru periods as conservative traditional women who differ from other literary periods. The description of the issues of Indonesian Malay females as social documentation of the archipelago is reflected in twelve selected novels from the 1920s to 1940s. The benefits obtained are enrichment of references and information on the presence of typical Indonesian Malay females in the narratives of Indonesian literature from the 1920s to 1940s.

The scientific method used in this research is the integration of the Structural Literary Approach with Feminist Literary Criticism, which emphasizes females' issues in literary structures such as characterization and themes carried by literary works. This research method is narrated in four parts such as Indonesian Malay Literature 1920-1940, Structural Literary Approach, Feminist Literary Criticism, and finally, the Research

Framework which explains the stages of the research. The literary works as the main objects of this research data include the novel *Azab and Sengsara* written in 1920 by Merari Siregar; *Sitti Nurbaya* written in 1922 by Marah Rusli; *Salah Asuhan* written in 1928 by Abdoel Moeis; *Tak Putus Dirundung Malang* written in 1929 by Sutan Takdir Alisyahbana; *Sengsara Membawa Nikmat* written in 1929 by Tulis Sutan Sati or Hamidah; *Karena Mentua* written in 1930 by Nur Sutan Iskandar; *Dian Yang Tak Kunjung Padam* was written in 1932 by Sutan Takdir Alisyahbana; *Kalau Tak Untung* written in 1933 by Selasih; *Si Cebol Rindukan Bulan* written in 1934 by Datuk Madjoido; *Kehilangan Mestika* written in 1934 by Fatimah Hasan Delais or Hamidah; *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck* written in 1938 by Hamka; and *Layar Terkembang* written in 1938 by Sutan Takdir Alisyahbana.

The presence of women in ritual traditions, cultural power, and beliefs in Islamic spiritual teachings throughout the narratives of twelve selected Malay Indonesian literary works from 1920 to 1940 show various interesting phenomena to be explored as social issues for women. These issues include parental and family intervention in matchmaking, devotion to parents, obedience to customs, maintaining virginity/self-honor, true love for the soul/spirituality, marriage based on social status, death due to failed lovemaking, uneducated women resigned to domestication, and educated women steadfast in facing life's problems.

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