

# **The Image of Women in the Main Character of the Novel Jais Darga Namaku by Ahda Imran: A Feminist Approach**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Literary works are very influential in human life because they contain messages and lessons that can be taken for life. Novels are literary works with various themes, including social issues that generally occur in society, including those related to the image of women. This research aims to describe the image of women in the novel *Jais Darga Namaku* by Ahda Imran using a feminist approach with Sugihastuti's theory that focuses on two main aspects in the form of women's self-image and women's social image of the main character, *Jais Darga*. The data source in this research uses the novel *Jais Darga Namaku* by Ahda Imran, published by Gramedia in 2022. This research was conducted using a descriptive qualitative method. The data presented are words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs that contain images of women. The data collection technique used document analysis by reading, recording, classifying, and describing. The results of the study can be concluded that the image of women in the novel *Jais Darga Namaku* by Ahda Imran includes (1) Women's self-image from the physical aspects of puberty, menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and psychological aspects that have humility, intelligence, independence, resilience, and self-confidence, and (2) The social image of women in the family through their role as independent and forgiving wives and mothers and the social image of women in society as successful women in the international art world.

**Keywords :** Image of women, Feminism, *Jais Darga Namaku*, Ahda Imran.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Novels are one of the literary works that play an important role in providing insight into life's complexities. In addition to entertainment, novels also serve as a means to voice social, cultural, political, and humanitarian issues, including issues related to women in society. Women have become an important subject in literary studies, especially in unequal power relations due to patriarchal domination. In literary works, women often experience struggles against stereotypes, marginalization, and gender injustice that are still rooted in social structures. Therefore, reading female characters and images in novels is important as a form of social criticism and strengthening awareness of gender equality. As explained by Zabidi in (Oftavia et al. 2023: 25), in literary theory, the role of women occupies a special place that is widely discussed.

The novel *Jais Darga My Name* by Ahda Imran is one of the novels that raises issues about women. This autobiographical novel, published by Gramedia in 2022, totaling 527 pages, tells

about the life journey of a woman named Jais Darga. The novel tells the life journey of Jais Darga, the first woman from Indonesia to become an international art dealer. Jais Darga is portrayed as an independent and resilient woman who defies the patriarchal order and manages to master her body and mind. As a leading female art dealer, Jais represents the image of an independent and empowered woman.

(Sugihastuti, 2019: 212) explains that the image of women includes all forms of spiritual, mental, and daily behavior expressed by Indonesian women. According to Sugihastuti, the image of women can be divided into two: the self-image of women, which includes physical and psychological aspects, and the social image of women, which includes the image of women in the family and the image of women in society.

Several previous researchers have conducted research on the image of women in novels. Research (Mardhiana & Apriyani, 2023) examined the image of women in the novel *Laut Bercerita* by Leila S. Chudori. The results showed that the character Asmara Jati represented a strong self- and social image, including courage, care, and social responsibility. Furthermore, (Wardani and Rina, 2020) examined the image of women in the novel *Kala*, which depicts female characters who are strong, simple, and active in social life.

Based on these studies, studies on the image of women have been conducted in various Indonesian novels. However, until now, no research has been found specifically examining the novel *Jais Darga Namaku* by Ahda Imran. This novel features the struggle of an Indonesian woman in an international world dominated by men. The novel presents complex social problems, including misogynistic issues, patriarchy, and gender injustice. This is why the novel *Jais Darga Namaku* by Ahda Imran was chosen as the research subject. This research is here to examine the image of women, especially the character Jais Darga, through a feminist approach with Sugihastuti's theory that divides the image of women into two, namely the self-image of women and the social image of women. The character of Jais was chosen because she reflects the principles of feminism, such as individual freedom, rejection of gender stereotypes, struggle for economic independence, and resistance to the patriarchal system.

## METHODS

This research uses descriptive qualitative research. Semi (2021: 30-31) states that qualitative research is always descriptive, meaning that the data analyzed is in the form of words or images and not in the form of numbers, which generally take the form of recording and describing phenomena so that all things in the form of a sign system are not underestimated. The research method is a work step to describe an object, phenomenon, or social event described in narrative writing (Yarsama & Catri, 2023: 159). In collecting data, document analysis techniques are used to obtain data contained in the novel *Jais Darga Namaku* by Ahda Imran to reveal the image of the main character, Jais Darga, using a feminist approach with Sugihastuti's theory. According to Sugiyono (Prasetyorini, 2020: 34), the document analysis technique is a technique that collects data or information in the form of writings such as novels, magazines, biographies, diaries, and others. The primary data source used in this research is the novel *Jais Darga Namaku* by Ahda Imran, which was published in 2022. This novel tells the story of Jais Darga, the first woman from Indonesia to become an international

art dealer. Jais Darga is portrayed as an independent and resilient woman who defies the patriarchal order and gains control of her body and mind. As a leading female art dealer, Jais represents the image of an independent and empowered woman. After reaching the data collection stage, the researcher analyzes the data by grouping the findings according to the focus of the problem under study. The data that has been collected is organized and described based on the research objectives. Furthermore, the researcher concludes these results by referring to Sugihastuti's theory. The conclusions were obtained by interpreting the data based on the theory, especially related to the image of women, which includes two main aspects: women's self-image (which includes physical and psychological aspects), as well as women's social image (i.e., the role of women in the family and society), as depicted in the novel Jais Darga Namaku by Ahda Imran.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the image of women is analyzed in the main character, the female character in the novel Jais Darga Namaku by Ahda Imran, the character Jais Darga. (Sugihastuti, 2019: 45). This explains that the image of women is all forms of mental and spiritual images and daily behaviors expressed by women (Indonesia). Sugihastuti explained that the image of women can be divided into two, namely the self-image of women, which includes physical aspects and psychological aspects, and the social image of women, which includes the image of women in the family and the image of women in society. The image of the main character in the novel Jais Darga Namaku by Ahda Imran is as follows:

### Women's Self-Image

Women's self-image shows how physical and psychological aspects are associated with the values prevailing in society.

The following will present the female self-image of the main character, Jais, in Ahda Imran's novel Jais Darga Namaku, based on physical and psychological aspects.

### Women's Self-Image from a Physical Perspective

By God's nature, women's physical characteristics are different from those of men. (Sugihastuti, 2019: 94). This explains that physiologically, women who have entered adulthood are characterized by physical signs such as experiencing menstruation, giving birth, and breastfeeding children.

The following quote is found on page 105 as follows:

- (1) *My body is starting to grow. A teenage girl starts to feel uncomfortable when a man looks at her chest. My breasts began to look inflated like there was a pair of mangoes that I hid under my shirt. It was no longer enough to cover them with a mindset* (Imran, 2022: 105).

The quote shows that the character Jais experiences changes during puberty, where her body begins to grow, including the development of breasts. However, this process causes Jais' discomfort as a woman towards her physical changes. This reflects the fact that women's bodies are often viewed as objects by a patriarchal society.

The following quote shows that Jais, as a woman undergoing puberty, will experience

menstruation. Menstruation is regular bleeding from the uterus as a sign that her gynecological organs have matured (Nainar, dkk. 2024:66).

- (2) *One day, I felt really weak and cold. The bottom of my stomach hurt, too. After taking medicine, the cold did not go away. I didn't go to school for a few days and just slept. Suddenly, one day, the base of my forehead was bleeding. Monthly blood kept coming out more and more* (Imran, 2022: 114).

This quote describes Jais' first experience of menstruation, which marks her physical maturity as a woman. She feels pain and discomfort, which are everyday things women experience during this process. However, in the process of feminism, this experience reflects how women's bodies are often considered weak or taboo in a patriarchal society.

The following quote shows that Jais can experience pregnancy. The quote is found on page 312 as follows:

- (3) *Because Didier and I were together, I ended up getting pregnant. I was so happy. Didier called my pregnancy a beautiful name, the fruit of love* (Imran, 2022: 312).

The quote shows that Jais' pregnancy was a conscious choice based on love and not coercion. By referring to it as the "fruit of love," Jais demonstrates control over her body and rejects the patriarchal view that sees pregnancy as an obligation. She appears free and independent in determining the meaning of her bodily experience.

The following quote is found on page 319, as follows:

- (4) *After the induction injection, my labor broke. I was already lying in the labor room and staring at the ceiling, trying to forget the excruciating pain in my stomach. My blood pressure was good, and my baby's heartbeat was normal. She told me to relax, catch my breath, and not be nervous. I tried, kept trying to think of pleasant things, but always failed. The storm in my stomach was excruciatingly painful, pushing down, feeling stretched, achy, and painful. I finally gave up. I just enjoyed the pain as the joy of motherhood. The body in my stomach was extremely painful, pushing down, feeling stretched, sore, and painful. At precisely noon, January 12, 1990, the creature that often teased me with jerks and gentle movements in the stomach came out of my body* (Imran, 2022: 319).

The quote describes the pain-filled process of childbirth that Jais went through with awareness and acceptance. Jais interpreted the suffering of childbirth as a form of happiness and strength for a mother.

### **Women's Self-Image from a Psychological Perspective**

Based on their psychological aspects, women are thinking, feeling, and aspiring beings (Sugihastuti, 2019: 95). The image of women psychically can be described as beings with thoughts and feelings, so this determines the image of their behavior.

The self-image of women from the psychological aspect described in the novel *Jais Darga Namaku* by Ahda Imran is that of a humble, tough, and intelligent woman. Jais is a child born into a noble family. Her father, Raden Mas Dargawidjaja, was a nobleman, a landlord in Cirateun, and a highly respected lurch. Despite being born into a respected family, Jais remained humble and not arrogant.

The following quote shows that Jais is humble and kind to a beggar. The quote is found on

page 83 as follows:

- (5) *If Aki had not given me the vine seed, I might not have paid attention to it as much as I do now. I call him Aki. If you see him once, it is easy to tell that he is a beggar. Aki always carries a pipit, a rectangular container made of woven bamboo, in which she accepts whatever people give her. With his frail old body, Aki walked everywhere daily but always came to our house. I do not know when Aki first came. All I know is that she liked to sit on the terrace of the back pavilion. Bi Amah liked to give him a drink. I loved talking to him about everything. "Where has Aki been today? Who did you meet? What did you see?" I asked. Every time I come home from school, I often go straight to him after washing my hands and feet. Whenever Aki came home, I would give him his food and put it on his cheeks (Imran, 2022:82-83).*

The quote shows that Jais is a woman of humility. She is not arrogant and is kind to anyone. Jais is not portrayed as a passive and apathetic character but actively builds social relationships and fights stereotypes about women as creatures who only dwell in the domestic space.

The following quote shows that Jais is an intelligent woman. The quote is found on page 108 as follows:

- (6) *My studies at school were fine; I was fairly smart. It did not take me long when I was in the second grade of junior high school, just a few months, jumping straight to the third grade. If you have to spend three years finishing junior high school, it is only two years for me. I had no trouble keeping up with the third-grade lessons even though I had only been in the second grade for a few months (Imran, 2022:108).*

The quote shows Jais's psychic self-image as an intelligent woman. Jais rejects the stereotype that women are not as intelligent as men.

The next quote is found on page 187 as follows:

- (7) *If this is a defeat, I do not want to bow down to it. I want to be like Mom, who kept her face straight in the middle of the family meeting before the divorce. Moreover, Mamih Subang could not refuse when I took and sold her land to make up for the lack of money from Haji Sulaiman for the sale of the house. However, it still could not lessen my defeat and sadness (Imran, 2022:187).*

The quote shows Jais's psychic self-image as a strong woman. Women have always been considered weak compared to men. In fact, there are so many women who have strong psyches, for example, the female character Jais, who can get through her problems and refuses to accept everything with resignation.

### **Women's Social Image**

The social image of women is closely related to the norms and value systems that apply in a group of people, where women are members and desire to have human relationships, both in the family and society.

The image of women in social aspects is divided into two roles: the role of women in the family and the role of women in society. A role is the part that a person plays in every situation and the way to behave to harmonize with the situation (Wolf in Sugihastuti, 2019: 121).

Personal demands and sacrifices often accompany women's roles in the family. Many women have to sacrifice their desires and identities because of traditional expectations that wives are required to be able to provide attention and prioritize the needs of their husbands. Not to mention, the patriarchal system in society places gendered men in a higher position than women, where men are seen as having the power to control or subjugate women. (Widhiyana, 2024:83).

The following will present the social image of the female character Jais in Ahda Imran's novel *Jais Darga Namaku* based on the social image of women in the family and society.

### **Women's Social Image within the Family**

According to Sugihastuti (2019:64), the role of women in this family includes women as mothers and wives. Both roles are very influential in women's lives. Although times have developed, where women also have the opportunity to work in public, there is still a view that in the family, the role of women is still synonymous with household chores, such as serving husbands, educating children, and taking care of work in the house. Society still believes that women's primary duty is to serve their husbands.

The following quote is about Jais trying to be a good and responsible wife. The quote is found on page 250 as follows:

- (8) *One day, I talked to Toni about my desire. I explained the good opportunity we could have in the midst of the vibrant art world. A painting gallery would undoubtedly make the antique gallery more complete. After I explained the impact of economic progress due to development and its effect on lifestyles and the painting business, Toni did not respond. However, he did not say that my desire was a bad idea* (Imran, 2022:25).

The quote shows the social image of women in Jais' family as wives who obey their husbands. This obedience is found in how Jais does not want to make her own decisions. Having an idea to open a business, Jais took the initiative to discuss her idea first with her husband. However, Jais' courage in conveying big ideas in the art business world shows her rejection of the norms that often underestimate women in the art world.

The next quote is found on page 246 as follows:

- (9) *You must know that in the past, every married woman who did not work had 'Follow Husband' written on her ID card. Well, I am not a woman, after all. I helped manage Toni's antique gallery because I love everything related to art. If Toni's shop had been a building materials store, it would have been impossible for me to do something like that. I do not live to follow anyone* (Imran, 2022:246).

The quote shows Jais's social image in the family as an independent wife. Her independence shows that Jais opposes the patriarchal ideology that requires women to be submissive and dependent on their husbands.

The next quote is found on page 479 as follows:

- (10) *Magali's problem with Maurice and Pascal is more complicated than mine. You can enter into a business partnership with anyone and then cancel it when it goes against you, just as you can marry and then divorce over and over again with anyone. However, you can't do that with a child. My son is out of my hands but will remain my son. I have slowly stopped lamenting about it. No matter how disappointed I am, I am*

*still a mother. After all, love is always forgiving, including forgiving my son's choice to stay with Pascal. My son is wandering in search of his identity* (Imran, 2022:479).

The quote explains the social image of women in Jais' family as forgiving mothers. Despite facing disappointments and difficulties in her relationship with her child, Jais shows acceptance and forgiveness. Jais shows wisdom in accepting her child's independence, which is a form of rejection of the norm of parental control in children's lives.

### **The Social Image Of Women In Society**

The image of women is reflected in the family and community environments. Women have a high level of sensitivity and can quickly place themselves in the social center of society. Society's social attitude is an individual attitude that responds to social objects, including the opposite sex (Sugihastuti, 2019: 131).

The social image of women in society in Ahda Imran's novel *Jais Darga Namaku* depicts the character Jais as a successful woman.

The following quote is found on page 423 as follows:

(11) *(11) Like an octopus with tentacles that can reach anything in different places simultaneously, while preparing for Ida Bagus Made's exhibition, I was also busy preparing for the exhibition and opening of Darga & Lansberg Galerie in Paris. This was my next ambition—an old ambition to open the windows and doors of the world to the French people. On the evening of July 4, 1998, the Darga & Lansberg Galerie was inaugurated by the Indonesian Ambassador to France, Satrio Budihardjo Joedano. That night, we also saw the opening of an exhibition of six Indonesian painters. My friends Putu Wirata, Putu Suasta, Jean Coutaeu, Magali, Maurice, and, of course, Pascal hosted the opening of the exhibition. That night, guests and visitors filled the gallery to the front. Besides artists, art dealers, journalists, and collectors, Indonesians, including the famous poet Sitor Situmorang, lived in Paris* (Imran, 2022:425).

The quote shows the social image of women in Jais' society as successful women. Jais Darga successfully merged her gallery with Maurice's, proving that Jais can compete in the global business world. Thanks to her success, Jais became one of the first female art dealers and buyers from Indonesia who was influential in the international art world. Jais' success in achieving her ambitions is a form of rejection of gender stereotypes and shows that women can play an important role in the global professional sphere.

The next quote is found on page 388 as follows:

Women's self-image from the physical aspect

(12) *I received invitations from art dealers and collectors in Paris almost daily. I imagined how they viewed me as a buyer and a very exotic and warm Eastern woman. Besides getting them at auction, I got some works from art dealers, including a work by Bernard Buffet and a sculpture by Modigliani. As promised by a collector when I was in Bali, he was willing to release me two of his collections, works by Chagall and Picasso* (Imran, 2022:388).

The quote shows the social image of women in Jais' society as influential women in the international art world. She is respected as a buyer with great financial power and can access high-value artworks such as Modigliani, Chagall, and Picasso. As an Eastern woman, Jais

was aware of the "Exotic and warm" stereotype attached to her but smartly leveraged it to build strategic relationships with art dealers and collectors. With her social skills, buying power, and art insight, Jais became one of the prime movers in the art world.

Jais has many jobs and other commitments, such as hunting paintings in Europe and Indonesia. However, her busy schedule does not prevent her from playing an active role in social activities and contributing positively to society.

The following quote is found on page 418 as follows:

- (13) *In such murky waters, when I am in Bali, my friends and I gather at my Suwung house and the gallery. In addition to discussing the current situation, we take social action, distributing necessities to poor people in remote villages in Bali. Rice, coffee, sugar, cooking oil, milk, and all the necessities have become very expensive for low-income people* (Imran, 2022:418).

The quote shows the social image of Jais, who actively participates in social action activities. Her social action shows that she uses her position to positively impact others, combining the art world and concern for society. This can be seen as a rejection of the narrow view of women, where they are only seen in domestic roles. Jais, with all her success, is changing that view by being an empowered woman with a social vision. (13) In such murky waters, if I am in Bali, my friends and I gather at my Suwung house and the gallery. In addition to discussing the current situation, we take social action, distributing necessities to poor people in remote villages in Bali. Rice, coffee, sugar, cooking oil, milk, and all the necessities have become very expensive for low-income people.

## CONCLUSION

From the discussion, it is concluded that two images of women are depicted in this novel through the character of Jais Darga. First, women's self-image includes physical aspects and psychological aspects. The physical aspect shows that Jais experiences menstruation, pregnancy, and childbirth, while the psychological aspect shows that Jais has humility and intelligence. Second, the social image of women includes the image of women in the family and the image of women in society. The image of women in the family shows that Jais is an obedient, independent wife and a forgiving, patient mother. Meanwhile, the social image of women in society in the novel *Jais Darga Namaku* by Ahda Imran depicts the character Jais as a successful woman in the international art world, a woman who acts as an influential art dealer and buyer, and a woman who is active in social activities. This research shows that the novel not only voices women's issues but also shows a picture of Indonesian women who can transcend traditional boundaries and gender stereotypes.

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