

Prophetic Feminist Pedagogy in the Dancer: Gendered Suffering, Islamic Ethics and the Education of Moral Imagination

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Abstract

This study examines Ahmad Tohari's *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* and *Bekisar Merah* to formulate a concept of prophetic feminist pedagogy grounded in women's bodily experience. Rather than treating the female body as a passive cultural object, the study positions it as an epistemic locus through which moral meanings are produced, contested and reimagined. Using qualitative textual analysis informed by theories of embodiment, gender performativity and prophetic imagination, the research analyzes how bodily suffering becomes a site for ethical reflection within the narrative structure of the novels. The findings reveal three interrelated epistemic processes: wound, agency and moral imagination. First, the wounds experienced by Srintil and Lasi expose the failure of customary norms, religious morality and capitalist aesthetics to protect women's dignity. Second, these bodily experiences generate forms of agency that interrupt dominant gender scripts and challenge social definitions imposed on women's bodies. Third, the emergence of moral imagination enables the characters—and readers—to envision alternative ethical horizons beyond systems that commodify or regulate the female body. Through this process, Tohari's fiction functions not only as a representation of gender injustice but also as a pedagogical space in which ethical values are tested through lived bodily experience. This study contributes to feminist literary criticism and Indonesian literary studies by proposing that prophetic feminist pedagogy can be conceptualized as an educational model where the legitimacy of moral values is verified through women's embodied experiences.

Keywords: Ahmad Tohari, Gender Injustice, Indonesian Literature, Prophetic Feminist, Women's Body.

Introduction

Debates about the representation of women's bodies in the study of patriarchal literature and culture have long highlighted how the body is made a commodity object, a symbol of morality and an instrument of legitimacy of power, but far less rarely places it as a source of ethical knowledge (1, 2). In social theory, Foucault affirms the body as an arena of discipline and normalization, where power works through rituals, gazes and rules that conquer the subject while making it obedient and "useful" (3). Meanwhile, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological tradition of the body and contemporary feminist readings emphasize that embodiment is a synthesis between "having a body" and "being a body" (4, 5). Recent studies even call for embodiment to be taken seriously in public policy, journalism and social practice because ignoring the embodiment perspective means reproducing epistemic injustices against vulnerable groups,

especially women (6-8). Thus, ignoring the body in ethical formulation is tantamount to ignoring the primary terrain in which justice or injustice is actually experienced. To this end, prophetic feminists, as proposed in this study, refer to an ethical education framework in which women's embodied suffering becomes a source of critical knowledge, moral evaluation and transformative imagination. Instead of treating women's bodies as objects of passive regulation, this framework understands the experience of the body as an epistemic site in which unjust moral orders are exposed, contested and reoriented to human dignity, liberation and transcendence.

In the Indonesian literary landscape, Ahmad Tohari's works—especially *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* (The Dancer of Dukuh Paruk) and *Bekisar Merah* (The Red Bekisar)—present the village women's bodies as a meeting point of customs, religion and capital that fight with each other, but

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(Received 30th January 2026; Accepted 08th April 2026; Published 23rd April 2026)

existing research still tends to be descriptive. A number of studies have mapped forms of gender injustice, symbolic violence and masculinity hegemony in the Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk trilogy, showing how Srintil became a site of layered suppression in the social structure of rural Java (9–11). Other studies highlight gender representation and possible equality in Bekisar Merah interpreting Lasi's body at the intersection between new social class, the market and family morality (12–14). Recent research even reads the Tohari women's body as a colonized body produced as a field of domination as well as a potential resistance in Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk, as well as an ecofeminist locus that connects the exploitation of women and nature (15, 16). However, most of these studies have not explicitly formulated how the female body in Tohari's work can be understood as an epistemic axis that tests customary moral claims, religion and capital. It is this gap that opens up the need to reread Tohari not only as a depiction of social reality, but as a construction of a model of ethical knowledge based on women's bodies.

This study integrates three interrelated conceptual strands. First, embodiment theory explains how the body functions not merely as an object of social inscription but as a lived site of perception, pain and ethical judgment (5, 17). Second, existentialist and performative feminism clarifies how women are socially constructed through repeated gender norms, while also revealing the possibility of interrupting those norms through embodied resistance (18, 19). Third, prophetic thought and moral imagination provide an ethical horizon through which suffering is not only described but transformed into critique, hope and the envisioning of more humane social relations (20, 21). Read together, these perspectives allow Ahmad Tohari's fiction to be interpreted not simply as a representation of women's oppression, but as a pedagogical space in which the body becomes a medium for testing the legitimacy of moral claims.

On the other hand, the discourse of Islamic feminism, prophetic feminism and prophetic pedagogy has developed rapidly in recent decades, but has not been systematically linked to the literary reading of women's bodies (7, 22–25). Muslim feminists in Indonesia show how religious authority and women's movements can build

women's "self-ownership" in the midst of hierarchical social structures (22, 26). In parallel, the literature on prophetic pedagogy develops educational models that integrate the values of humanization, liberation and transcendence into curricula and learning practices, including in character education, adolescent curriculum and language teaching (27–31). However, most of this research still focuses on formal educational institutions and normative texts of religion, not on how literary works make the female body a field of prophetic pedagogy itself. Departing from this vacuum, this article aims to:

- a) analyze how the female body in Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk and Bekisar Merah is disciplined by customs, religion and capital;
- b) show how the experience of bodily injury triggers moral agency and imagination; and
- c) formulate a body-based prophetic feminist pedagogical concept that places the female body as an epistemic authority in testing society's moral claims.

Materials and Methods

This research method is designed to ensure that the theoretical framework that has been built in the previous chapter does not stop at the conceptual level, but works operationally in reading literary texts as a space for the production of ethical knowledge. Because this research places the female body as an epistemic locus and the novel as a field of moral articulation, the methodological approach chosen must be able to trace the traces of meaning hidden in the narrative, body symbols and social configurations that surround it. Therefore, this study uses interpretive qualitative analysis that allows an in-depth exploration of the relationship between text, body experience and the value horizon at stake. This approach does not aim to generalize findings, but rather to uncover the internal logic of the text and test the consistency of moral claims that emerge through the experiences of female characters. This chapter outlines research materials, analysis procedures and interpretive validation mechanisms so that the readings carried out remain systematic, transparent and academically accountable.

Materials

The main material of this research is Ahmad Tohari's two novels, Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk and

Bekisar Merah, as shown in Figure 1A and 1B respectively, which are treated as cultural texts that contain traces of power, gender configuration and articulation of women's bodies. The selection of the two novels was carried out by purposive sampling technique, which is the selection of cases that are considered the richest in information and relevant to the focus of the research, not based on statistical representations (32, 33). In the tradition of literary qualitative research, texts are understood as "social documents" that store the structure of meaning and power relations that can be read critically, not just a stand-alone aesthetic work (34–36). Thus, Tohari's novel is positioned as primary data that allows the exploration of how women's bodies are constructed, disciplined, while trying to reclaim their moral agency. Secondary data in the form of journal articles, theoretical books and previous research on Tohari, the body, feminism, prophetism and pedagogy were used to construct interpretive dialogues and test the consistency of textual findings with broader scientific discourse (37–40). This approach is in line with the practice of text-based inquiry in literary studies and cultural studies, which combines close analysis of texts with reflective theoretical readings (41–43). In this way, the research material not only provides illustrations, but also serves as the

basis for the formulation of conceptual categories such as wounds, agency and moral imagination.

Methods (Analysis Procedure)

The analytical procedure follows the tradition of critical discourse analysis and qualitative hermeneutics, which views texts as social practices that are always related to power relations and historical structures of meaning (35, 44). The first stage is repetition reading and open coding, which identifies narrative segments related to women's bodies—customary rites, sexual relations, body

economics, moral stigma and moments of resistance—and then labels initial ones that are descriptive and conceptual (39). The second stage is thematic categorization, in which the initial codes are synthesized into three main analytical categories derived from the theoretical framework: wound (the body as the site of suffering and ethical failure), agency (the body as an interruption to social definitions) and the moral imagination (the body as a source of new ethical horizons) (45). The third stage is theoretical interpretation, which relates categorical findings to theories of the body, gender and prophetism—Foucault and Merleau-Ponty to understand the body as a locus of power and subjectivity, Beauvoir and Butler to explain the construction and perpetuity of gender, to interpret the prophetic and imaginative dimensions of the ethical processes that take place in the text (3, 5, 20, 46–48). The validity of interpretation is maintained through theoretical triangulation and intra-text consistency, not through statistical generalization, since the goal of qualitative literature research is depth of understanding, not numerical representativeness (49, 50).

Theoretical triangulation is carried out by testing each interpretive claim against more than one conceptual framework, so that the reading does not fall on free subjectivity, but becomes the result of negotiation between the text and the theory. In addition, the analysis procedure follows the principles of qualitative trail auditing: the coding process, theme grouping and selection of key citations are systematically documented so that the traces of the argument can be retraced by other researchers (39, 40). Thus, this method allows for a scientifically responsible reading, in which the female body in Tohari's work is placed not only as an object of suffering, but as a source of legitimate epistemic claims regarding justice, prophetism and pedagogy.



Figure 1: Novels – (A) Novel Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk (51) and (B) Novel Bekisar Merah (52)

Results

This chapter presents the results of an analysis of the *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* and *Bekisar Merah* by placing the female body as the center of the production of ethical knowledge that tests the legitimacy of customs, religion and capital. Through a layered textual reading, the research findings show that the female body in Ahmad Tohari's work is not a passive entity that solely accepts the consequences of power, but is an epistemic instrument that reveals the failure of moral structures as well as formulating an alternative ethical horizon. The results of the analysis are categorized into three epistemic domains—wound, agency and moral imagination—each of which represents the stage of the body's transformation from a controlled object to a subject of knowledge. The discussion in this chapter not only describes the narrative events experienced by Srintil and Lasi, but also interprets how their bodily experiences function as prophetic critiques of the restrictive social order. Thus, this chapter does not just present data, but explains how literature works as a pedagogical space that demands moral accountability through women's body experiences.

Bodily Suffering as a Source of Prophetic Knowledge: Srintil and Lasi as Body Figures That Voice Wounds

The suffering of women's bodies in *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* and *Bekisar Merah* does not exist as a narrative ornament, but as an epistemic medium where culture, power and economics establish their ideology. Srintil and Lasi are not just figures, but conceptual devices: it is through their bodies that society learns to construct a hierarchy of values, interpret honor and determine who has the right to determine human dignity. It is in this context that the body becomes a prophetic text—not because it conveys revelation in the theological sense, but because through the wounds it bears, it exposes the falsehood of the social order that claims to be moral. The body that is performed, polished, traded and consumed is a pedagogical locus that forces the reader to interpret power as an established proxy, not a normative abstraction. Therefore, the pattern of exploitation of women's bodies experienced by Srintil and Lasi cannot be understood as an individual event, but as a consistent and orderly structure—a social curriculum that teaches how women are reduced from subjects to objects. It is this pedagogical structure that summarizes and condenses in

Table 1, which shows how bodily suffering works as a source of prophetic knowledge that reveals the

operation of cultural and capitalistic domination over women.

Table 1: Women's Body as a Source of Prophetic Knowledge in Ahmad Tohari's Work

Characters	Forms of Body Submission	Primary Quotes	Page	Power Operations	Prophetic Forms of Knowledge
Srintil	Customary commodification	"What is being contested is the virginity of the prospective dancer."	RDP 63	Custom → body as public property	Revealing that tradition can produce violence with moral legitimacy
Srintil	Symbolic violence	"That bed... a massacre..."	RDP 54	Rituals → body discipline	Revealing that the body is used as a means of patriarchal education
Lasi	Aesthetic engineering	"Her skin is getting whiter... my tamarind is tame."	BM 101-150	Capital → body as an image	Revealing that modernity produces subjugation through aesthetics
Lasi	Body ownership	"That Bekisar is already mine."	BM 151-200	Money → body as property	Revealing that love shifts into a relationship of power and ownership

Note: RDP= Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk—Novel by Ahmad Tohari (51), BM= Bekisar Merah—Novel by Ahmad Tohari (52)

The suffering of women's bodies in Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk reveals the power structure that works through customs. Srintil does not just undergo the ritual of opening; She experienced how culture extracts meaning from women's bodies. "Bukak-klambu adalah semacam sayembara... Yang disayembarakan adalah keperawanan calon ronggeng" ["Bukak-klambu is a kind of competition... What is being debated is the virginity of the ronggeng candidate"] (RDP p. 63). Srintil's body is positioned not as an ethical subject, but as a social exchange value. The Tohari language even likens Srintil's first sexual experience to a symbolic execution: "Tempat tidur itu tidak lebih dari sebuah tempat pembantaian... penghancuran" (Translate: "The bed is nothing more than a slaughterhouse... destruction") (RDP p. 54). Here, the body is not only subjected to violence; He educates the reader that culture can perpetuate violence while calling it tradition.

In the Bekisar Merah, the logic that subdued Srintil was not lost; it is reincarnated in a more subtle form. Lasi is not forced by ritual, but by the mechanism of capital that forms the body as an obedient and sellable image: "Putih kulitnya makin hidup... bekisarku sudah jinak" ["The whiteness of his skin is more and more alive... my spine is already benign"] (BM pp. 101-150). When Handarbeni declares, "Bekisar itu sudah jadi milikku" ["Bekisar is already mine"] (BM pp. 151-200), the female body becomes an algorithm of power: custom and capital both subjugate women through conquest framed as attention. It is at this point that bodily suffering turns into an

epistemology of wounds—a moral knowledge that does not teach what is right, but exposes the absurdity of a society that fails to distinguish love from possession. Thus, the female body in both novels is present as a source of prophetic knowledge: it dismantles the structures that make it up, while at the same time demanding that the reader imagine a more humane ethic.

Rituals, Customs and Village Islam: The Boundaries of Feminist Prophetic Ethics in Paruk Hamlet

The Hamlet of Paruk is an epistemic space where customs and Islam do not reinforce each other, but postpone each other's prophetic potential. Custom dominates women's bodies through sacred rites, while Islam only exists as a passive moral aesthetic and does not formulate a strategy of liberation. Srintil and Lasi witnessed that the value system in Paruk Hamlet did not lack religion, but lost the ethical ability to make religion a defense force for women's bodies. This is where the prophetic failure lies: revelation exists, but it doesn't work; tradition walked, but without an emancipatory orientation. To see how these two systems limit the female body, Table 2 maps the operation of both power and the disconnection of both from feminist prophetic ethics.

Both texts are treated as primary data sources that show how women's bodies are positioned between two systems that fail to carry out the prophetic ethics of liberation.

Table 2 shows that customs and Islam in Paruk Hamlet are not just belief systems, but normative

machines that limit women's bodies within a non-negotiable horizon. Custom binds Srintil's body to a rite that does not open up the space for interpretation, while Village Islam in Bekisar Merah only creates inner peace without preparing a social criticism device. From a feminist prophetic perspective, both systems fail not because of a lack

of spiritual value, but because of the inability of both to understand the female body as a source of moral claims. In other words, the body is not considered as the locus of ethical revelation, but rather as an object that must be secured by a value structure that has never been tested.

Table 2: Operation of Customary and Village Islamic Power on Women's Bodies in Paruk Hamlet

Value System	Operating Instruments	Body Representation	Primary Quotes	Page	Prophetic Status	Key Description
Ronggeng Customs	Rituals and magi	The body as a social commodity	"Pedupaan, gayung tanah, pakaian dalam bekas..." ["Incense, soil dippers, used underwear..."] "Ia menolak pemugaran surau... pengeras suara..."	RDP 56-57	Non-prophetic	Tradition regulates the body without ethical reflection.
Village Islam	Surau and asceticism	The body as an object of moral order	["He refused the restoration of the surau... loudspeakers..."]	BM 201-202	Prophetic inhibited	Morality is present, liberation is absent.

Note: RDP = Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk—Novel by Ahmad Tohari (51), BM = Bekisar Merah—Novel by Ahmad Tohari (52)

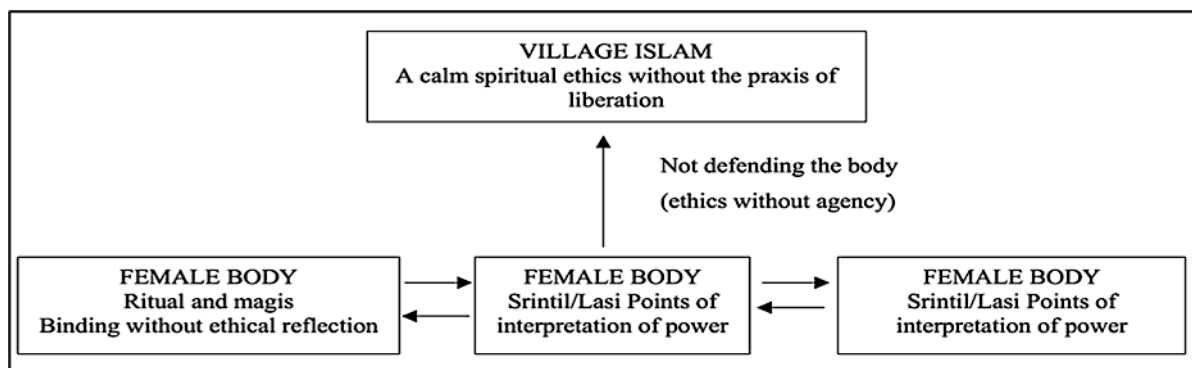


Figure 2: The Female Body as an Epistemic Axis between Custom and Village Islam

Figure 2 paints the picture that the female body is the epistemological center, but it has never been the center of conversation. Custom binds it, Islam does not defend it and capital—later—acquires it. Tohari shows that the female body is not just a field for power struggle, but a mirror of the prophetic failure of a society. The image reveals the irony: the supposedly prophetic system (Islam) does not position the female body as a source of moral criticism, while the most profane system (custom) actually determines the value of the body without ethical reference. Thus, true prophetism is not found in institutions, but emerges through wounds in women's bodies that force the reader to rethink the boundaries of tradition and religion. It is at this

moment that feminist prophetic pedagogy works: it does not propose the cancellation of custom or religion, but demands a rearrangement of moral reference points—from text to body, from doctrine to experience, from systems to humans.

From Ronggeng to Bekisar: Capitalistic Modernity and the Recommodification of Women's Bodies

The transformation of the female body in Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk and Bekisar Merah does not move linearly but through a series of body codes that show how power changes shape without ever losing its object. In the hands of Tohari, the female body is not just a medium of suffering, but a field of meaning production that

shows how customary regimes, modern aesthetics and financial capital take turns to conquer with different methods but lead to the same result: the loss of the sovereignty of the female body over herself. This shift is not a matter of space or time, but a change in the way the body is thought, interpreted and managed by a social system that claims to be evolving. Therefore, to understand the depth of the feminist prophetic criticism that

Tohari constructs, it is necessary to look at how the female body moves from a ritual instrument to an aesthetic commodity and then becomes entangled in the ownership of capital. Table 3 summarizes the ontological evolution of the female body in the two novels, showing not only what happens to the body, but how it is reinterpreted as an increasingly hidden but increasingly effective strategy of power.

Table 3: The Evolution of the Ontology of the Women's Body in Ahmad Tohari's Work

Stages of Evolution of the Body	Power Mode	Transforming Agent	Body Status	Recommodification Mechanism	Primary Quotes	Epistemic Implications
Body-Ritual (Srintil)	Communal customs and rituals	Kartareja / village community	The body as public property	Legitimacy of the sacredness of the body through rites	"What is being auctioned off is the virginity of the prospective dancer." — RDP, p. 63	The body is not a self-experience, but a source of collective legitimacy → women lose their interiority
Body-Aesthetic (Early Stage Lasi)	Aesthetic capital	Mrs. Lanting	Body as image	Body polishing for the aesthetic market	"Her skin is becoming more vibrant... my bird is already tame." — BM, p. 101-150	The body is reduced to a visual sign → the woman does not sell her body, she becomes her body
Body-Property (Late Stage Lasi)	Capitalist ownership	To have	The body as a private asset	Acquisition of bodies through financing	"The Bekisar is now mine... I will cover all the costs." — BM, p. 151-200	The body loses agency → identity turns into an extension of male wealth
Body-Symbolic	Narrative representation	Readers/society	The body as a field of interpretation	The body becomes the moral language	implicit in the overall plot	The female body becomes a moral camera that records society's failure to understand human beings
Body-Epistemic	Feminist prophetic criticism	Tohari Literature	The body as a source of knowledge	Body wounds become a vehicle for criticism	synthesis of findings	The female body is not an object of criticism; The body is the criticism itself

Srintil's body was never his own; It is enforced by the community. Lasi's body had never chosen her; It is administered by capital. What changes is not the female body, but the architecture of power that governs it: from the rites that borrow sacredness to subjugate the body, to the aesthetics that borrow beauty to define the body, to capital that borrows love to have the body. At each stage, the female body is not present as the origin of meaning, but as an empty space that must be filled by the will of the other party. Modernity thus does not abort

customs; he refined it—replaced coercion with persuasion, replaced tradition with taste and turned conquest into treatment. At this point, power relations no longer work coercively, but affectively: it does not command women to submit, it makes women feel a reason to submit. It is in this logic that three fundamental propositions can be established: Custom subdues the female body through mechanisms of shame, constructing a social order in which bodily identity is considered valid only

insofar as it is recognized and sanctioned by the community. Within this framework, shame operates as an epistemic tool that disciplines the body under the collective gaze, leaving little room for personal agency or self-definition. In contrast, capital subdues the body through pride by producing conditions in which women are compelled to enhance, refine and display their bodies as value-bearing projects in order to be seen and acknowledged. Here, the body is not merely regulated but actively celebrated as a site of aspirational self-investment, transforming subordination into a desirable condition. Despite their apparent differences, both custom and capital ultimately fail to recognize the female body as a source of ethical claims. In both regimes, the body is positioned as an object to be shaped, managed and interpreted by external forces, rather than as a subject endowed with moral authority. As a result, the female body is rendered silent—it does not speak for itself but is continuously spoken for within dominant discourses.

As a result, body injuries are not a side disorder in the social system, but structural evidence that women's bodies were never designed to be subjects. It becomes a kind of ontological indicator—a pointer that records the ethical distortion of society. As long as a woman's body is only legitimate if it is seen, improved, or owned,

the society is still in the pre-prophetic stage. Thus, the female body serves as a prophetic barometer: to the extent that the body is not recognized as the owner of the vote, the extent to which the ethics of society can also be declared a failure. Feminist prophecy, in the context of Tohari, is not an invitation to celebrate the body, but a warning that freedom does not start from an idea, but rather from the recognition that the female body is the source of morality, not the object of morality.

Prophetic Feminist Pedagogy: Wounds, Agency and Moral Imagination as Ethical Learning Spaces

If the previous three sub-results prove that the female body is a medium of power, then this sub-result shows that the same body actually gives birth to the ability to learn ethically. Tohari does not place Srintil and Lasi as women who understand morality from the outside, but as women who produce morality through the experience of their own bodies. Thus, the pedagogy in Tohari's work does not come from institutions, religions, or customs, but from the failure of social structures in protecting women's bodies. This is where wounds become lessons, agency becomes methods and moral imagination becomes the result of learning. Table 4 shows how these three processes work textually and measurably in the two Tohari novels.

Table 4: Manifestation of Prophetic Feminist Pedagogy in Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk and Bekisar Merah

Pedagogical Components	Srintil (RDP)	Lasi (BM)	Textual Evidence	Ethical Function
LUKA (Body as locus of power)	The body is treated as a customary commodity	The body is engineered into the image of capital	"I'm scared... I'm being sold." / "Bekisar is... no longer a village girl."	Wounds reveal flaws in the value system; The body becomes a detector of ethical failure
AGENCY (Rejection of the definition of the body)	Rejecting the power of rites through personal will	Delaying the legitimacy of capital over the body	"I'll stop being a dancer... you're the one." / "She doesn't fully believe in her appearance yet."	Agency appears as an interruption of meaning; body seizes the right to interpret itself
MORAL IMAGINATION (New ethical horizons)	Imagining the status of women outside the ronggeng	Wanting to live without the value of bodily ownership	"Srintil just wants to be seen as a complete woman." / People's change in attitude toward Lasi brings about a new ethical awareness.	The moral imagination opens up ethical possibilities beyond custom & capital

Note: RDP = Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk—Novel by Ahmad Tohari (51), BM = Bekisar Merah—Novel by Ahmad Tohari (52)

Table 4 shows that feminist prophetic pedagogy does not work through instruction, but through epistemological mechanisms that start with the body. Srintil and Lasi learn not because they are taught, but because their bodies experience a failure of the value system. Luka serves as an epistemic curriculum—it forces women to

understand that ethics that do not protect the body are not legitimate ethics. From this wound is born agency, not as a physical resistance, but as a suspension of meaning, the highest form of bodily learning that rejects external definitions. The culmination is moral imagination—the ability to imagine life forms that do not make the body an

object of ritual or possession. Thus, Tohari's feminist prophetic pedagogy reverses the direction of education: it is not the body that learns ethics, but ethics that are tested by the body.

At this point, the table simply shows how wounds, agency and moral imagination appear in the narrative. However, feminist prophetic pedagogy is not just a sequence of events, but an epistemic mechanism that moves within the female body. To show that this learning process is not linear, but pivots to the body as an ethical axis, a visual representation is needed that captures the direction of the movement of meaning: ascending as morality, descending as power and crossing as a negotiation between imagination and agency. The following Figure 3 maps the structure of the pedagogy, not as a storyline, but as a flow of knowledge born from the female body and tests the validity of social ethics.

Figure 3 shows the female body as an epistemic axis that drives the dynamics of knowledge: upward toward prophetic ethics as moral elevation, downward toward power regimes as

structural pressures and sideways toward negotiations between moral imagination and agency. This visual confirms that ethical learning in Tohari's work does not come from external norms, but rather from bodily experiences that verify the moral validity of a system. Figure 3 shows that the female body is not just the starting point of experience, but the axis of the rotation of meaning. This is where feminist prophetic pedagogy works: the body checks the pressure of power, gives birth to wounds; wounds arouse agency; agency opens the moral imagination; and imagination encourages ethical revision. Thus, the learning process does not move linearly from teaching to action, but vertically and laterally—uphill toward morality and crossing over to the subject of the body. This model precludes the possibility of reading Tohari as mere social documentation; He points out that Toharism is an epistemic method, in which moral truth is not inherited from the system, but is tested by the body that experiences that system.

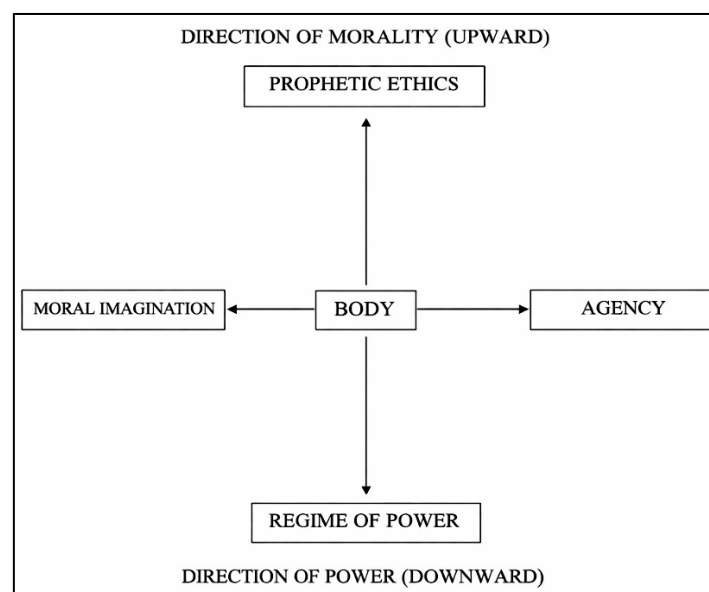


Figure 3: The Dual-Axis Model of Feminist Pedagogy Prophetic Ahmad Tohari

The four sub-results above show that Ahmad Tohari's work does not simply photograph women's suffering, but builds an epistemic architecture that makes the female body the center of social ethical validation. From customary exploitation to capital engineering, from religious failures to community sluggishness, women's bodies become instruments of moral reading that expose the distortions of the value system. At the same time, the wounded body produces an ethical

learning mechanism consisting of wounds, agency and moral imagination as a feminist prophetic device. Thus, the results of this study confirm that Tohari's criticism is not at the level of a narrative theme, but at a methodological level: it shifts the role of the body from an object of experience to a source of prophetic epistemology that forces the reader to reassess the nature of morality in society.

Discussion

The main purpose of this research is to interpret Ahmad Tohari's works, especially Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk and Bekisar Merah, as an epistemic space where women's bodies play a role not just as objects of representation, but as subjects that produce moral knowledge. So far, criticism of Tohari's work has often stopped at mapping women's suffering or gender inequality without developing an epistemological framework that explains how the experience of the body can be a source of ethical validity. The framework proposed by this study places bodily experiences—especially hurt, shame and exploitation—as pedagogical mechanisms that force female characters to reassess the social norms that govern them, in line with feminist epistemology that links knowledge to subjects' positions, interests and material experiences (51, 52). This perspective is also consistent with understanding the text as a social practice that contains power relations and can be read critically—not just an aesthetic artifact (35, 44). Thus, ethics is no longer positioned as a set of rules that stand outside of experience, but rather as something that must be verified by concrete experience that the body bears.

The finding that the female body is the site of knowledge resonates with thinking that rejects the classical separation between the body and the ratio. Foucault views the body as an operational arena of power, where social discipline works through rituals, normalizations and institutional devices (3). In the context of Tohari, the ronggeng rite and the aesthetic engineering of the body show how the female body is “administered” by custom and capital, while wounds and shame reveal the moral failure of the value system that claims to be legitimate. At this point, Merleau-Ponty's concept of the body-subject becomes key: the body is not an object for consciousness, but a condition for consciousness—the body feels, assesses and presents the world as a meaningful experience (5). Therefore, Srintil and Lasi's bodies not only mark the position of the victim, but act as an epistemic instrument that corrects the moral claims of society, in line with the call of cutting-edge studies to “take embodiment seriously” in assessing social ethics and practices (4, 7).

The pedagogical significance of these findings lies in the fact that Tohari's fiction does not merely depict women's suffering; it stages suffering as a

mode of ethical learning. In this framework, bodily pain functions as an exposure of moral failure, agency functions as a refusal of imposed meanings and moral imagination functions as the capacity to envision more just forms of life. Literary representation thus becomes pedagogically meaningful not because it offers explicit moral instruction, but because it compels readers to reassess the legitimacy of social values through the embodied experiences of the characters.

If Beauvoir states that women are often defined as “the Other”, then Tohari shows how women can suspend this definition through agency born of bodily suffering (46). Butler's thinking on gender performativity helps explain that gender identity is not essential, but rather is produced through the repetition of norms; therefore, moments of rejection, pause, or aberration can open up gaps in the articulation of different identities (47). In other words, agency in this study is not just a “narrative” resistance, but an epistemic interruption of the norms that establish submission. In the next stage, the moral imagination works as a capacity to imagine alternative ethical horizons; This idea is intertwined with the prophetic imagination that places suffering and hope as the basis of world-building—perhaps beyond the dominant order (48, 53). In the Indonesian context, prophetic orientation—humanization, liberation and transcendence—can be understood as a framework of social criticism that tests the validity of values from its ability to protect human dignity (20, 54-57). Therefore, prophecy in this reading is not treated as dogma, but rather as an ethical operation verified by the body that bears the consequences of the system.

The main implication of this study is the need to reassess the way literary works are read related to gender, religiosity and morality. So far, ethics has often been understood as an abstract system that is outside the body; even though morality that ignores the experience of the body risks reproducing structural violence that is difficult to detect (7). Reading Tohari shows that the female body can function as a prophetic barometer: if a value order fails to protect the body, then the moral legitimacy of that order is questionable (3, 20). The consequence for education and literacy is to place literature as an “ethical laboratory” that tests value through the experiences of figures, in

line with the tradition of critical pedagogy and feminist pedagogy that positions experience (including bodily experience) as a source of knowledge production and transformation (57). Thus, the discourse of prophetic feminism has gained a more operational footing: prophetic values are not automatically attached to customary/religious authority, but are tested at the level of experience of women's bodies that bear the impact on the physical and psychological realms.

Further research can test this model of wound-agency-moral imagination in other literary works to see if patterns of body-based prophetic pedagogy also emerge outside the context of Tohari. A comparative study of the work of women authors can clarify whether the body as a source of prophetic epistemology is a particular aesthetic peculiarity or part of a broader tendency. Interdisciplinary studies that combine learning theory, trauma studies and Islamic feminism can also expand the explainability of this model, including examining readers' responses to wound narratives and how they mediate changes in moral judgment. For methodological reinforcement, advanced research can combine textual reading and more explicit qualitative design (e.g., case studies, trail audits and thematic coding), as suggested in the qualitative methodological literature (33, 39, 45, 49). Thus, the next research agenda not only expands the corpus, but also tests the robustness of these analytical models in a variety of textual contexts and learning practices. This study has several limitations. First, it focuses only on two novels by Ahmad Tohari, so the proposed concept of prophetic feminist pedagogy is developed within a specific literary and cultural corpus rather than across a wider comparative archive. Second, the analysis is based on qualitative textual interpretation and therefore prioritizes depth of reading over empirical generalization. Third, although the study formulates pedagogical implications, it does not test them in classroom settings or through reader-response data. These limitations do not weaken the conceptual contribution of the study, but they indicate that future research should examine other authors, broader literary traditions and applied educational contexts in order to assess the wider transferability of this framework.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the female body, within the context of Indonesian literary discourse, is systematically positioned within competing regimes of control shaped by both custom and capital. Rather than functioning as an autonomous subject, the body is constructed as an object of regulation—disciplined through shame within traditional structures and reconfigured as an aspirational project under capitalist logic. These findings confirm that domination does not operate in a singular form but is reproduced through different yet interconnected ideological mechanisms.

The main contribution of this study lies in the development of a prophetic feminist pedagogical framework, which reconceptualizes the female body not merely as a site of oppression but as a source of ethical claims and critical consciousness. By integrating embodiment theory, feminist ethics and prophetic discourse, this study offers a novel theoretical lens that bridges critical theory and educational praxis. This framework extends existing feminist discourse by emphasizing moral agency and ethical voice as central to reclaiming subjectivity.

The implications of this study are both theoretical and pedagogical. Theoretically, it challenges dominant paradigms that treat the body as passive and instead positions it as an active site of meaning-making and resistance. Pedagogically, it provides a foundation for designing learning approaches that encourage critical awareness, ethical reflection and transformative engagement with sociocultural realities, particularly in literary education contexts.

However, this study is not without limitations. The analysis is based on a limited corpus of literary texts, which may not fully represent the diversity of Indonesian cultural narratives. In addition, the interpretive nature of the analysis may be influenced by the theoretical positioning adopted in this study. Future research is therefore recommended to expand the corpus, incorporate interdisciplinary approaches and explore empirical applications of prophetic feminist pedagogy in classroom settings. Further studies may also investigate how this framework operates across different cultural contexts to enhance its generalizability and theoretical robustness.

Abbreviations

CDA: Critical Discourse Analysis, PFP: Prophetic Feminist Pedagogy, RQ: Research Question.

Acknowledgement

The authors are also grateful to colleagues in the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto for their academic support and intellectual discussions during the development of this research.

Author Contributions

Akhmad Fauzan: conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, writing – original draft, writing – review and editing, Tono Suwartono: supervision, methodology, validation, writing – review and editing, Darodjat: supervision, validation, theoretical review, writing – review and editing, Onok Yayang Pamungkas: investigation, resources, data curation, writing – review and editing.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Data Availability

All data analyzed in this study are derived from published literary works (Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk and Bekisar Merah by Ahmad Tohari) that are publicly available. Relevant textual excerpts are included in the manuscript. Additional analytical materials are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Assistance

The authors used an AI-assisted tool exclusively for language editing and polishing purposes. All conceptual, analytical and interpretative aspects of this study are entirely the authors' original work and full responsibility for the content is retained by the authors.

Ethics Approval

This study was conducted in accordance with applicable ethical guidelines and research principles.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

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How to Cite: Fauzan A, Suwartono T, Darodjat, Pamungkas OY. Prophetic Feminist Pedagogy in the Dancer: Gendered Suffering, Islamic Ethics and the Education of Moral Imagination. *Int Res J Multidiscip Scope*. 2026; 7(2): 1377-1390. DOI: 10.47857/irjms.2026.v07i02.010334