



Serat Partakrama: A Javanese Woman's Beauty and Idealism Symbolism

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Abstract. Nowadays, discrimination and body shaming are still essential issues for women. There is also a current standard of beauty that refers to the beauty standards of South Korea. Thus, this study aims to describe beauty in woman's idealism since the days of the Kraton Surakarta, whose story was written in *Serat Partakrama* in 1825 until today's generation Z. This study uses ethnolinguistic theory to describe the research problems. The method used in this research is the qualitative research method. The type of literature study research, *Serat Partakrama*, explains that a woman's beauty comes from within and outside. Beauty from within forms a good personality. In addition, it also radiates women's visuality, which makes them beautiful inside and out. However, the idealism of Javanese society today has changed. Many Javanese people modify their visuals with cosmetic surgery or plastic surgery. The demand for social status makes beauty something necessary. Due to the ever-changing standardization, many women experience bullying, discrimination, and mental illness.

Keywords: Symbol · Idealism · Beauty · Women

1 Introduction

Discrimination and body shaming are still significant issues for women today. Various studies explain that body shaming is more common for women than men. It happens because women have more internalized judgments that make their bodies the object of observation [1]. In 2018, the Indonesian National Police handled 966 cases of body shaming [2], and 374 issues were resolved. In 2019, the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) recorded that 68% of body shaming cases were carried out by vocational school (SMK) students [3]. Based on the survey results conducted at the Zap Clinic in the Zap Beauty Index 2020, the cause of Indonesian women experiencing body shaming cases is 40.7% of the body being fat. While women who experienced body shaming due to skin breakouts were 36.4%, and a chubby face shape was 28.1% [4].

Body shaming can be interpreted as an act of bullying both mentally and physically. As a result, many women experience mental illness and have eating disorders, such as bulimia nervosa, anorexia nervosa, and so on [5]. In addition, they also experience depression and shame, which can lead to a sense of self-distrust.

For this reason, this research aims to describe how beauty has still been the idealism of many women. It has happened since the days of the Surakarta Palace, whose story was written in *Serat Partakrama* in 1825, until now. This understanding needs to be changed because beauty does not need to be compared to success. Previously, Lestari [6] also discussed bullying against self-appearance or body shaming in young women who experience body dysmorphic disorder by establishing a diagnosis based on DSM-V symptoms of body dysmorphic disorder in college students.

This study uses ethnolinguistic theory to describe the problems in detail. Ethnolinguistics is a science that studies the relationship between language, culture, and society [7]. According to Tolstoy in Bartminski [8], ethnolinguistics is a science that investigates cultural content realized through formal means as a critical idea in integrating linguistic and cultural data into a cultural code.

Based on the statement above, the formulations of the problem are: (1) What is the symbolism of beauty in *Serat Partakrama*? and (2) How is the idealism of Javanese women developing in society? These two problems form the purpose of this study to determine the symbolism of beauty contained in *Serat Partakrama*. Furthermore, it is also to find out the idealism of Javanese women that is developing in society. The benefits of this research are theoretically to support the development of ethnolinguistic science and studies in one of the ancient Javanese manuscripts. For practical uses, it provides benefits to researchers and readers. To researchers, it can be the basis and development for further research, and the readers can understand the act of body shaming which counts as a crime.

2 Methods

The method used in this research is the qualitative research method. It is a research method that uses words in a sentence to describe the problem. The qualitative method reveals an event in context to find a deep meaning or understanding of a problem [9]. The primary data source in this research is *Serat Partakrama*, and the secondary data sources are books, journals, and articles that are accessed via some websites. These sources can be in the form of published notes, textbooks, newspapers, manuscripts, articles, and the like [10]. Moreover, this study uses a type of literature study which emphasizes the analysis of written text based on the context of the problem.

3 Results and Discussion

Serat Partakrama describes the beauty of a woman that comes from inside and outside. Inner beauty forms a good personality and implicates women's visuality, which makes them beautiful both inside and out. However, the idealism of Javanese society today has changed since many Javanese people modify their bodies with cosmetic or plastic surgery. This is done because of social demands that make beauty important. Due to the ever-changing standard of beauty, many women assume they are not accepted in society if they are not gorgeous, which affects depression and bullying, as well as disrupts mental health.

3.1 The Symbolism of Beauty in Serat Partakrama

A symbol is a sign that has a specific meaning. According to Webster's dictionary [11], a character is something that shows, represents, or gives the impression of something, such as a dove, which symbolizes peace. Printed or written signs can be in the form of letters, abbreviations, and others in *Serat Partakrama* have many written symbols. One of them is the symbol of beauty contained in the Empress Sri Nalèndra Krsna.

/o/ sêmbadanning pramèsuari /garwannira sri nalèndra /titiga éndah warnanné /... (Asmarandana, 1:14).

Meaning:

/o/it is fitting for the empresses/ the wife of the king/ The three of them are very beautiful or jelita/.

The quote describes the empresses of the king. It explains that the empresses are gorgeous. In general, the word beautiful is an adjective. The word is usually an additional word as an affirmation. In Indonesian, 'jelita' is defined as something extremely beautiful (about the face). *Jelita* means a girl who is beautiful in appearance and speech [12] or physically and mentally attractive. At the same time, it aids people in becoming famous and lifts their image due to behavior, morals, property, or body [13].

The Supraba symbol in *Serat Partakrama* explains that Supraba, or Batari Supraba, is an angel who is well-known for her beauty. Supraba is a *primadona* 'ceremonial angel' Suralaya consisting of seven nymphs: Batari Supraba, Dewi Lenglengdanu, Batari Gagarmayang, Batari Tunjungbiru, Batari Irimirin, Batari Warsiki, and Batari Wilutama.

ingkang sêpuh garwannira/ éndang gadamadana /sutèng wré jêmbawan wiku /patuttira lan trijatha /-(Asmarandana, 1:14).

/o/ parab déwi jêmbawati /warnannira lir supraba /ruruh wingit pasêmmonné /... (Asmarandana, 1:15), (Serat Partakrama).

Meaning:

The eldest queen/ Endang Gadamadana/ The Daughter of Resi Jembawan/ The pair with Trijatha /.

*/o/Her name is Dewi Jembawati/ **She is wonderful as Supraba**/ her face indicates her holiness/.*

The quote above shows the existence of symbols in the *Serat Partakrama*. It is found on the first empress, Dewi Jembawati (Endang Gadamadana), the first wife of Prabu Kresna (king of the Dwarawati kingdom King Krishna is the incarnation of the last king of Sang Hyang Vishnu [14]. Meanwhile, Dewi Jembawati is Rishi Jembawan's daughter with Trijatha who has a form like Supraba.

Beauty symbolized as Supraba is a beauty that comes from physical appearance. Supraba is a puppet figure queen of an angel. As we know, an angel is known for her beautiful face. It is supported by Raturahmi & Wanty [15], who discuss the representation of women's sensuality in the AXE perfume advertisement, the dating version of the angel.

This study describes models that are likened to angels. *Bidadari* has a beautiful face, an ideal body, also beautiful wings [15].

Furthermore, the moonlight is also a symbol of the beauty of a woman. Many individuals express themselves by responding to the beauty of women by likening the moonlight. When connoted, the moon is a living figure who can see. Besides, it is also a compliment for a woman. At the same point, the moon has a meaning that people believe so far as a symbol of female perfection [16].

It is also found in *Serat Partakrama* that a woman who is likened to the light of the moon is the first empress of King Narendra Krishna, called Dewi Jembawati. Below is the excerpt in *Serat Partakrama*.

.../ *pasaja tanpa léléwa /cahya nuksmèng sasongka/*...(Asmarandana, 1:15).

Meaning:

.../ Humble and not arrogant / possessed the moonlight.

This quote reveals the appearance of the first empress of King Krishna, namely Dewi Jembawati. Dewi Jembawati is a holy empress who is kind, humble, and not arrogant. Thus, someone dealing with Dewi Jembawati can feel her magnificent nature. Someone as moonlight can feel the character of Dewi Jembawati.

Moonlight is interpreted as humble and not arrogant. Beauty symbolized by the moonlight is a form of beauty that comes from inside. An Italian film star, Sophia Loren, understands that female beauty is what is felt from the heart, then radiates from the eyes. Beauty is not only visual (physical) but also inner [17]. Beauty can also be said to come from within a woman who gives rise to a good personality.

In *Serat Partakrama*, three symbols symbolize the beauty of a Javanese woman. Beauty is the standardization of Javanese society at that time and came from inside and outside. Beauty from within forms a good personality. In addition, it also radiates women's visuality, which makes them beautiful inside and out.

3.2 The Idealism of Javanese Women Based on Public's Views

Many women argue that the ideal woman has physical beauty as the main thing. Indonesian society started the standard of beauty in ancient Java, namely a character Shinta, wife of Rama in the Ramayana literary story. Shinta's beauty is well-behaved, radiant, white, and charming. In the Javanese, women's beauty criteria are white, clean, straight long, and smooth hair [17].

The women's emancipation movement has been glorified, but women's subconscious still holds fast to their feelings about their physical condition [18]. It makes women often modify their bodies to achieve specific goals in changing body shape [19]. The existence of beauty standards makes Indonesian women flock to make body modifications. By doing cosmetic or plastic surgery, women will get their beauty standards. According to the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ISAPS), 10,129,528 plastic surgery procedures were performed in 2020. The most popular procedure worldwide is breast augmentation surgery, with 1,624,281 operations. Liposuction surgery is also in great demand, with 1,525,197, eyelid 1,225,540, and nose 852,554. The last one,

abdominal tightening operations, was performed in 765,248 procedures. Countries that occupy the highest positions in plastic surgery are the United States, Brazil, and Germany [20].

In addition to beautifying themselves, modifying the body is also due to social demands. In South Korea, body and face are the keys to social status. A person with a perfect body and face is considered successful in life. Physical beauty is more associated with superiority and creates a competitive advantage that can help to find a job, choose a partner, and achieve a higher social and financial status [21]. It happens because work requires employees to have an attractive appearance. The appearance of company employees has become an important thing and is a company demand. Job vacancies include 'appearing attractive' as one of the requirements that must be met by job applicants, predominantly female job applicants. For example, in bank companies, they are considered by the public to have a more attractive appearance than employees in other work environments. It happened since the appearance of bank employees who wore uniforms with blazers and short skirts gave an elegant, neat, and authoritative impression on female employees [22].

Over time, the standard of beauty change and are set by the public. The emergence of the Korean Wave in Indonesia made the Korean standard the beauty standard of the Indonesian people [23]. These days, Korean beauty standards are influencing Indonesian society. It happens because of the widespread advertising throughout the country. One cosmetic brand advertisement that uses a Korean model is Wardah Beauty Cosmetics. The brand uses a famous Korean celebrity who converts to Islam and uses the hijab.

Physical beauty standards made by the community affect bullying against women who are considered not by the criteria for beauty standards. This can result in acts of discrimination for those who become insecure and causes mental illness due to the beauty standards made by society. The appearance of bullying can influence mental conditions that impact the psyche, seen in the emergence of anxiety, shame, lack of confidence, anger, low self-esteem, self-hatred, strict diets, food disorders, and other mental disorders. These mental disorders can be in the form of eating disorders, obsessive disorders, compulsions, and body dysmorphic disorders. In other words, victims of bullying will experience depression because they feel pressured and stressed about the surrounding environment. They observe that the community does not accept their presence due to their body shape and society's unideal standards [6].

The beauty idealism of Javanese society has begun to change over time. Many Javanese people modify their visuals with cosmetic surgery or plastic surgery. The demands of social status make beauty pivotal. Due to the ever-changing standardization, many women experience bullying, discrimination, and mental illness.

4 Conclusion

The current standard of beauty refers to the beauty standards of South Korea. It happens because, day by day, a huge number of advertisements or promotions are carried out through digital media, which spread worldwide quickly. Consequently, the physical beauty of Korean society changes Indonesian citizens to imitate and become like Korean people.

These days, physical beauty is number one in social status. Various ways are done to improve the appearance so that people can fulfill job vacancies and be accepted easily. The perfect body goals for some women will help them gain their dream job and become a mindset. Apart from work, appearance can also be a significant factor in looking for a life partner. It makes women change their bodies in droves so that they have to undergo plastic surgery to support and boost their standard of success.

Authors' Contributions. Natasya M. Fanesha was a person who was responsible for developing and planning the research. The research was conducted by Respati R. Utami. They collaborated to determine the best way to evaluate the data that was presented. Every researcher made contributions that were both informative and helpful, and they all played some role in the research as well as the writing of the paper.

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