

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the writer discusses the women's roles in the seventeenth century represented in *Rara Mendut* by Y.B Manguwijaya. As mentioned earlier in the introduction, the novel portrays the life and fate of women in the Mataram Kingdom, who were usually confined to the customs and habits of society. Every woman character in the *Rara Mendut* novel has different roles. The women characters in the novel are Rara Mendut-the main character, Ni Semangka- Rara Mendut's chaperone, Genduk Duku- Rara Mendut's maid-in-waiting, Nyai Ajeng- Wiraguna's wife, Putri Arumardi-Wiraguna's other wife, and Nyai Singabarong- Pranacitra's mother. Each character is discussed in terms of their gender-related roles, on-how women should act or talk-feminine and/or masculine characteristics, and their roles in labor division-domestic and/or public roles.

#### **4.1. Women's Roles in the Seventeenth Century Represented in Manguwijaya's Rara Mendut Novel.**

##### **4.1.1. Rara Mendut**

The novel's main character is Rara Mendut, and therefore the narrative about Mendut can be found easily in the novel. Interestingly, in *Rara Mendut* novel, Rara Mendut defies the stereotypical gender roles of a woman in seventeenth-century Java. Rara Mendut is not weak and brave. Rara Mendut's scene of bravery can be found in many parts of the novel. The first example that narrates her bravery is when she fights against the Mataram soldiers. When the palace, where she lives, is ambushed by the Mataram soldiers, instead of surrendering, she kicks and slaps the Mataram soldiers.

*“Tetapi Mendut ini? Dia hanya tegak berdiri, kain hanya dicincingkan sampai di atas lututnya, menendang menampar melawan seperti harimau betina membela anak-anaknya. Sebab setiap kali tangan mereka menjamah tubuh Mendut, kaki sang gadis menggenjot perut, tangan menampar muka dan tidak peduli kainnya sobek morat-marit lepas setengah telanjang”* [How about Rara Mendut? She was standing up straight, and her cloth was ringed up above her knees, kicking and slapping like a tiger defending her cubs. Because whenever their hands touched Mendut's body, Mendut's legs kicked their stomachs, her hands slapped the face, and she did not care whether her cloth was torn apart, stripped half naked]. (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 37)

In the story, the soldiers are also surprised to experience Rara Mendut's bravery. Even though being slapped and kicked by Rara Mendut, the soldiers cannot fight back because they are not allowed to fight women. Soldiers will tarnish their self-esteem if they win against a woman. They will also be ashamed if they lose to a woman. Later, Mendut shows more bravery by running and climbing the walls to save herself.

*Maka berlarilah si Mendut itu lalu memanjat dinding halaman keputrian... Lunglai kehabisan napas serta tenaga akhirnya Mendut terjatuh, nyaris terinjak oleh kaki-kaki kuda yang lewat. Kuda Panglima Tumenggung Wiraguna sendiri. ... Baru sesudah Mendut berdiri dan tegak berkacak pinggang, dada membusung tanpa takut dan tanpa satu kata pun menyinarkan sorotan matanya yang penuh amarah dan ungkapan menantang, tersenyumlah Wiraguna.* [And then Mendut ran and climbed the wall of the princess palace's

yard...Slacking out of breath and energy, Mendut fell and was almost trampled on by the passing horse. The horse of Commander Tumenggung Wiraguna himself...After that Mendut stood up straight, hands on her hip, her chest swelling without fear, and without a single word her eyes were full of anger and resistance, then Wiraguna smiled.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 38)

Even though she had fallen and was caught by the soldiers, she bravely stood up and looked keenly at the Wiraguna.

The other scene showing Rara Mendut's bravery is from another character's perspective, Ni Semangka. Ni Semangka observes Rara Mendut's behavior when she accompanies Rara Mendut. The scene above and the scene below both show how brave Rara Mendut is in her action, "*Rara Mendut ini memberontak; sulit diatur selama ini memang tata tingkahnya*" [Rara Mendut is rebellious; it's hard to be arranged so far it's her behavior]." (Mangunwijaya, 2019 p.16). The reason why Rara Mendut is against all the Mataram soldiers is that she does not want to live in *Keputrian Puri Pati* (The princess's quarter of Pati Palace). She wants to go back to her village.

Another scene showing Rara Mendut's bravery is when Wiraguna asks Rara Mendut whom she will choose, Wiraguna or Pranacitra. Firmly Rara Mendut answers that she chooses Pranacitra. Rara Mendut's answer shows her courage. She can freely express her feelings and honestly answer a question honestly without worry and fear.

*"Tegastlah, siapa yang kau pilih: Wiraguna atau Pranacitra?" langsung dijawab, "Pranacitra!" Tanpa kehilangan sepersepuluh detik pun.* ["Answer clearly, who do you choose: Wiraguna or Pranacitra?" The immediate answer: "Pranacitra" without losing a tenth of a second.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019 p.332)

This conversation happens when Wiraguna finds Rara Mendut and Pranacitra in the estuary. Wiraguna and Pranacitra have arguments and physical fights to get Rara Mendut. After Rara Mendut answers his question, Wiraguna feels disappointed and angry. As a result they start fighting. . The fight injures Pranacitra, and Rara Mendut gets involved in the fight to protect Pranacitra. Mendut even challenges Wiraguna to kill her because she is the one who makes mistakes. However, Wiraguna says that there are other ways to kill women. Upon hearing Wiraguna's statement, Rara Mendut retaliates.

*Mendengar itu Mendut berdiri tegak, dan mundur sedikit. Seluruh sikapnya sekarang adalah siap tempur, disamping kekasihnya. [Upon hearing that, Mendut stood up straight and backed away a little. Her whole demeanor was now ready to combat side by side with her lover] (Mangunwijaya, 2019 p.335)*

Rara Mendut is not afraid to speak up her mind and acts accordingly. In these scenes, Mendut shows her bravery by choosing her own life and doing what she loves, including choosing Pranacitra and protecting him even though Wiraguna despises her.

One of Rara Mendut's many iconic characteristics is being disobedient; She is rebellious. In Rara Mendut's case, rebellious means defying or resisting established authority, government, or tradition. A rebellious person is difficult to control and does not behave in the way that is expected. Some scenes in the novel show Rara Mendut's rebellious attitudes. The first example is when Nyai Ajeng is looking for Rara Mendut to ask her to dance to comply with Wiraguna's requests. Nyai Ajeng is shocked because Rara Mendut refuses to do what the woman asks her to do. She asks to be free instead.

*“Dapat menari kau, Mendut?” Ni Semangka langsung mencegat penjurusan yang dapat merepotkan segala-galanya, “Ooooh, maafkan, tidak bisa, Bendara Ayu Ajeng. Den Rara ini anak pantai yang belum lama di Kadipaten Pati.” Mendut memprotes galak, “Bisa saja!”*

*“Bisa?” Tanya Nyai Ajeng heran bercampur kecewa.*

*“Atas satu syarat.”*

...

*“Sesudah puas melihat Mataram ini, saya minta dikembalikan lagi ke rumah ibu saya.”*

[“Can you dance, Mendut? Ni Semangka immediately intercepted the question that could complicate everything, “Oops, I am sorry, she cannot. Nyai Ajeng. Den Rara has lived in the coastal area for a long time and recently just lived in the kingdom.” She protested bitterly, “I do.”

“Can’t you?” Nyai Ajeng asked with mixed amazement.

“I made a request with one condition.”

....

“When I have enough of this Kingdom, I ask to be sent back to my hometown.”] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 98)

Rara Mendut is never afraid to articulate herself. She wants to be free and does not want to live in the Kingdom. In the seventeenth century, women could not deny a request from people of a higher level. It is specifically applied to Rara Mendut, who is a captive woman. Mendut, who is intended to be the future wife to Wiraguna, does not have the right to express her feelings or thoughts at all.

On other occasions, Rara Mendut is rebellious not only in her actions but also in her speech. *“Siapa bilang aku calon istri Wiraguna” Tangkis Mendut sungguh kurang ajar, sehingga tak heranlah semua menjadi cemas* [“Who says I am Wiraguna’s future wife?” Mendut's defense was really insolent, so no wonder that everyone is worried.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 98)”

Rara Mendut’s refusal to be Wiraguna’s wife shows how rebellious Rara Mendut is. As told in the novel, women should live in *Keputrian* for trainings to be the wives of Wiraguna. However, Rara Mendut does not like to stay in the palace. She doesnot like to be guided and commanded by other people. Rara Mendut does not hesitate to speak up about what she wants or does not like. That is the reason why she is famous.

Another narrative that shows the rebellious Rara Mendut is when she sells cigarettes around the village.

*Peristiwa penjualan rokok oleh seorang putri boyongan dari Pati yang cantik molek teranglah merupakan lakon yang sangat menarik.* [The incident of a captive princess from Pati selling cigarettes was an exciting play.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 188)

The residents are very excited when they discover that the one selling cigarettes around the village is Wiraguna’s future wife; a woman who does not want to be Wiraguna’s future wife. She wants to buy her freedom with the money she gets from selling cigarettes. Another rebellion that Mendut does is by learning how to ride a horse to escape the palace, the *Puri*. Rara Mendut learns how to ride a horse from Genduk Duku, her little maid.



*Rara Mendut sudah mulai merasakan kunci-kunci keseimbangan di atas punggung kuda.... Bahwa untuk mencapai tingkat kemahiran dayang kecilnya, masih banyaklah dibutuhkan latihan. Ya, latihan melarikan diri terus terang saja. [Rara Mendut has begun to feel the keys of balance on the horse's back.... That in order to reach the level of proficiency of the little lady, it still takes a lot of practice.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 158)*

Actually, women are not encouraged to learn horse riding. Specifically, the future wife of Wiraguna, she must obey the rules and behave in a “good woman” manner. Yet, Rara Mendut asks Genduk Duku for help, to teach her how to ride a horse. Riding a horse will help her to escape from the palace.

What makes Rara Mendut's characteristics more attractive is that she is far from being gentle. Y.B Mangunwijaya describes her as a strong woman. Rara Mendut is a strong woman. It shows when she still has to sell cigarettes to pay the increased taxes that Wiraguna asks. Rara Mendut never gives up on selling it even though she is tired.

*Tiada jalan lain, penjualan rokok harus diteruskan. ... Selain untuk membayar pajak, nanti untuk bekal di jalan pulang ke pantai masih dibutuhkan uang juga. Ya begitulah, Mendut dan para dayangnya masih sederhana dalam harapan-harapan mereka, sebentar lagi dapat menghirup kemerdekaan. [There is no other way, cigarette sales must continue... In addition to paying taxes, and later on for supplies on the way back to her place, money is still needed. Yes, that's it, Mendut and her ladies-in-waiting*

still hope that soon they will breathe their independence.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 201)

Mendut feels tired when some people start to make fun of her selling cigarettes. However, she keeps doing it because she needs the money to buy her independence, going back to her place.

Another unique characteristic that Rara Mendut possesses is her independence. She shows a lot of independence through her attitude, actions, and speech when she stays in *Keputrian Puri*. For her, freedom is her ability to behave as she wishes without being controlled by anyone. Some parts of the novel show how Rara Mendut exercises her freedom as an independent woman. The first narrates when Mendut shows her independence to bring freedom of expression to the children around the *Keputrian Puri*.

*Tentang kebiasaan tersebut, Rara Mendut hanya mencari hiburan dan selingan sebab tidak terbiasalah ia terkurung dan termanja seperti yang dialami sekarang. Sebab Mendut gadis cerdas dan tidak ada orang cerdas yang merasa sreg bila termanja melebihi kewajaran.* [Regarding this habit, Rara Mendut was only looking for entertainment and distraction because she was not used to being confined and spoiled like what she was experiencing now. Mendut was a smart girl, and there were no intelligent people who feel comfortable when being pampered beyond the norm.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 50)



The narrative shows that Mendut is caged. Even though she is spoiled, she feels like being in a prison. Thus, she wants to be free. She prefers to living free than leading a constantly arranged life.

Another example showing that she is an independent woman can be found in her words and thoughts. Rara Mendut's independence is proven when Wiraguna asks her to pay the taxes daily. She sells cigarettes diligently amidst all the challenges because she wants to be sent back to her hometown. She also occasionally tries to find other ways to solve her problems. "*Kita harus cari akal. Akal mengalahkan uang, Ni Semangka. Mari kita pulang.*" [We have to look for other reasons. Reason beats money, Ni Semangka. Let's go back] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 163)."

Rara Mendut shows how independent she is when Wiraguna suddenly increases the tax price from three *real* to five *real* and should pay daily for selling cigarettes. Rara Mendut is quite sensitive to why Wiraguna always makes it difficult for her to pay the tax even though the previous requests have been made. "*Kita harus cari akal lain.*" [We have to look for other ways.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 163)."

Not only does Rara Mendut's attitude show how independent she is, but she also has intelligence characteristic, which is shown by her facial expression. Ni Semangka, in her first meeting, describes Rara Mendut's facial expression, which shows her as an intelligent woman.

*Terlalu cerdas dia dan terlalu menantang syarat-syarat sehingga sinar matanya sama sekali tidak menunjukkan pihak kalah menyerah sempurna.*

[She was intelligent and too challenging on terms in her eyes and did not show the loser's perfect surrender at all.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 34)

As described by Ni Semangka, Rara Mendut's gaze shows that she is a person who does not give up and does not want to lose quickly. The author narrates that Mendut is reflective of what she sees.

*Tersenyumlah Mendut dan Genduk Duku mendengarkan para kawula alit itu rukun merokok dari satu dua batang cukuplah, dari mulut satu ke mulut lain. ...Namun kesedihan tadi terimbangi oleh gagasan, bahwa selama masih ada rasa saling menolong, saling membagi sepuntung rokok, manusia masih dapat mencicipi secuil surga. Rara Mendut tersenyum dan senyumnya senyum syukur. [Mendut and Genduk Duku smiled after listening to the people who get along well, smoking one or two cigarettes was enough, from one mouth to another. ... The sadness was offset by the idea that as long as there was a sense of mutual help, sharing a cigarette, humans can still taste a piece of heaven. Rara smiled, and her smile was a smile of gratitude.]* (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 167)

In terms of labor division, Rara Mendut herself is a gift from the King of Mataram to Wiraguna. The kingdom that wins the fight will capture the spoils, including beautiful women from the conquered region, and Mendut is one of the spoils of war. Rara Mendut does not take the role as a wife, not a housewife, not a mother; here Rara Mendut is a to-be wife. The division of labor is not clear because she has just been prepared to-be a wife. In her preparation to become a future wife, Mendut is

taught to be polite and to become an ideal woman in society both, in words and actions. Nyai Ajeng persuades Rara Mendut by giving her a *kris* as a symbol of self-identity, both oneself, family, and clan, but Mendut still refuses to marry Wiraguna so she is called a dissident.

In this novel, Rara Mendut has more masculine than feminine characteristics. She is independent and brave, which according to England (2011) are masculine, not feminine characteristics. She does not represent the stereotypes of women's roles. She focuses on how to live freely. Rara Mendut is described as defying stereotypes. The novel illustrates that a woman can choose not to abide by the rules and norms of the seventeenth century, which requires women to be good women or good “wives.” For all, the novel shows that this kind of woman cannot easily win against the existing rules and norms. This kind of woman has to struggle, even die tragically. In short, women who are disobedient may suffer a tragic fate. Then, to be safe and happy, a woman needs to obey and play the roles desired by society.

#### **4.1.2. Genduk Duku**

Genduk Duku, Rara Mendut’s maid in waiting, has the same character as Rara Mendut. She is younger than Rara Mendut, and has lived in the palace since her childhood. In this story, Genduk Duku is described as a cheerful girl. She is young, and she has a pure and innocent character. The scene below represents Genduk Duku from Ni Semangka’s point of view in which Genduk Duku is described as lovely and can make other people happy.

*“Padahal manis sekali si Duku itu, segar mencitrakan fajar matahari timur, gembira selalu dan berani, kebal macam-macam hal tak enak. Seringkali*

*menjengkelkan kaum tua tentu saja”* [In fact, Genduk Duku is beautiful, fresh as the image of the dawn of the eastern sun, always happy and brave, insusceptible to all kinds of unpleasant things. Often annoying to old people of course.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 17)

Genduk Duku always follows Mendut everywhere she goes and she is always supportive. Genduk Duku knows what Mendut feels because their ages are not far apart. That is why Mendut is more comfortable sharing various things with Duku, and considers her as her sister by Mendut. One example of their sisterhood is expressed in the scene when Mendut asks Duku to track a handsome man, Pranacitra. In the beginning, Duku does not understand what she should do, but she knows that Mendut wants to know his name. Duku then pretends to be a seller and asks Pranacitra’s guards some information such as what the man’s name is, where he comes from, and where he lives. Duku is annoyed when two of the man’s guards always tease her. Yet, she attempts to control herself only because Mendut asks for help. Consequently, she continues to find out information about the man.

Duku believes in Rara Mendut. She even shares the same feeling Mendut has even without Mendut telling her. In the scene when she knows that Rara Mendut is crying, Duku is being supportive by calming and crying with Rara Mendut.

*Genduk Duku hanya dapat merebahkan diri juga disampingnya, tangan membelai bahu-bahu dan lengan-lengan puannya dan dapat apa selain ikut melelehkan air mata juga, karena merasa tak mampu menolong.* [Duku only laid down beside her, her hand caressing Mendut’s shoulders and arms and

there was nothing she could do but cry, feeling powerless.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 234)

Duku always feels sad when she knows Mendut is painful and always feels happy when Mendut is happy. For her, Mendut is her role model.

Genduk Duku's supportive character here is also shown when she decides to teach Rara Mendut to ride a horse as a way of escaping from the palace.

*“Kelak di Mataram Den Rara harus lebih rajin belajar naik kuda. Kalau sudah pandai, tanggunglah, nanti bersama Genduk Duku kita dapat melarikan diri pulang.”* [Soon in Mataram Den Rara must be more diligent in learning to ride a horse. If you are smart, bear it, later with Genduk Duku we can escape home.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 28)

Genduk Duku is a representation of loving and supportive women. Being a very young woman causes her not to conform to any clear roles yet. Even though being a supportive friend to Rara Mendut, she does not have feminine characteristics. She is the type of person who wants to explore and an athletic person because she can ride a horse. These traits indicate that she has masculine characteristics. That is why Genduk Duku will be like Rara Mendut in the future because she sees Mendut as her role model.

#### **4.1.3. Nyai Ajeng**

Nyai Ajeng, Wiraguna's wife, represents a “good” woman character in this story. Being a wife, she should be a good wife to her husband. She has characteristics obedient and submissive to her husband and the rules. She is also a caring person for

her husband and other characters.

Nyai Ajeng is the type of wife who is blindly faithful to her husband. She never questions and challenges her husband's requests or orders. She just does what her husband asks her to do. When Wiraguna talks about Rara Mendut, she just listens to him, although she feels uncomfortable with her husband's interest in Rara Mendut. As a wife, and it is common sense, Nyai Ajeng must be sad when she finds out that her husband is interested in another woman. However, Nyai Ajeng cannot make any complaint about it. She is in the position to merely approve the king's command, who bestows Rara Mendut to Wiraguna.

*“Bagaimana tari pentasan Mendut tadi?” Tanya Tumenggung Wiraguna kepada istri perdananya.*

*“Gadis ini punya bakat Kakanda. Tinggal diketam dan dipoles. Tetapi kayunya sudah sono-keling yang dapat diandalkan. Hanya sayang...”*

*Tetapi Wiraguna sudah tidak punya perhatian pada keterangan apa yang disayangkan itu. [“How is Mendut's dance performance?” Tumenggung Wiraguna asked his wife. “This girl has talent, Your Majesty. She just needs to be refined and polished, she is already reliable. But...”. But Wiraguna did not give any attention to what the weakness was about.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 103)*

She even teaches Rara Mendut to obey Wiraguna. When Wiraguna is angry and then increases the tax that Rara Mendut has to pay, Nyai Ajeng persuades Rara Mendut to be submissive. As a wife of Wiraguna, she is like a leader who directs other



wives to be good wives and to be good citizens. She teaches the wives to obey the husband and the kingdom.

*“Maka tunjukkanlah bahwa kita adalah istri-istri yang tidak hanya setia dan taat melayani beliau, namun sadar pula, bahwa nasib pertahanan dan keagungan negara tergantung dari panglima perangnya.”* [So let us show that we are wives who are not only loyal and obedient to serve him, but also aware that the defense and the greatness of the country depend on the warlord.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 157)

In that story, Nyai Ajeng feels furious because she always loses when she argues with Rara Mendut. Hence, she urges Wiraguna's other wives to act differently from Rara Mendut. Nyai Ajeng's obedience even makes her compliant. Nyai Ajeng is willing to accept Wiraguna's other wives, in this case, Rara Mendut wholeheartedly, *“...Hamba ikhlas dimadu, karena itu hak pria Jawa ningrat.* [I am totally willing to share my husband with other women because it's the right of a noble Javanese man.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 244)

Being a wife who cares about her husband makes Nyai Ajeng more sensitive to the needs of her husband. Nyai Ajeng knows what Wiraguna feels when he first sees Rara Mendut. Nyai Ajeng can conclude from Wiraguna's gestures that he is interested in Mendut's unique character, *Nyai Ajeng cukup berpengalaman untuk sadar, bahwa lelaki tidak hanya tertarik oleh kecantikan.* [Nyai Ajeng is experienced enough to realize that men are not only attracted by beauty.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 90).

Another incident showing Nyai Ajeng's sensitivity is when Wiraguna praises

Rara Mendut after the performance. From their conversation, Nyai Ajeng concludes that Wiraguna is already interested in Rara Mendut because he implies that he wants to marry Rara Mendut. The quotation below illustrates that Nyai Ajeng is sensitive even though Wiraguna has not been honest with her, *Sebab wanita tidak melihat dengan sepasang bola mata, tetapi dengan seluruh daya kewanitaanya.* [Because women do not see with a pair of eyes, but all their feminine power.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 104).

Nyai Ajeng fondly cares for her husband's physical well-being and dignity. The example of how Nyai Ajeng cares about her husband's well-being is shown when Nyai Ajeng serves Wiraguna. While Wiraguna is sleeping, she rubs her husband's sweating body. *"Hawa sedang panas pengap dan berkali-kali Nyai Ajeng harus mengusapi tubuh suaminya agar kering sedikit"* [The air is hot and stuffy and Nyai Ajeng has to rub her husband's body several times to dry it out a little.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 108).

Meanwhile, Nyai Ajeng's care to protect her husband's dignity is evident in the narrative below.

*Dasar sikap Nyai Ajeng pada hakekatnya hanyalah ingin melindungi suami pujaannya melawan kemungkinan-kemungkinan yang dapat merendahkan derajat maupun nama Sang Wiraguna.* [The basis of Nyai Ajeng's attitude was essentially just wanting to protect her husband against the possibilities that could degrade the status and name of the Wiraguna.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 188).

Nyai Ajeng maintains her husband's dignity several times. One other example is when

Rara Mendut flatly rejects him.

*Nyai Ajeng sekarang harus melindungi kewibawaan suaminya, dan menghindarkan kejadian sangat memalukan bila hasrat asmaranya sampai ditolak oleh seorang kawula-alit, apalagi putri suatu daerah yang memberontak dan kalah. [Now, Nyai Ajeng has to preserve her husband's dignity, and avoid a very embarrassing incident if his interest is rejected by a rebellious woman from the defeated region.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 139)*

Here, as a wife, Nyai Ajeng later persuades Rara Mendut to accept Wiraguna as her husband. She does not let the public know that Wiraguna is rejected. Nyai Ajeng's care for Wiraguna's dignity is also shown when Mendut goes around selling cigarettes. Nyai Ajeng advises Rara Mendut through Wiraguna to wear a veil so that no one knows Mendut's real identity as the future wife of Wiraguna.

*“Maafkan Nyai Ajeng, Kakanda. Namun demi nama baik Tumenggung Panglima Besar Mataram, apakah tidak perlu Mendut menggunakan cadar? Biar tidak setiap orang tahu siapa dia?.” [“I’m sorry, my husband, but for the good name of Tumenggung King Commander of Mataram, is it not better for Mendut to wear a veil? So that not everyone knows who she is?”]*  
(Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 184)

As a good wife, Nyai Ajeng always reminds her husband not to take actions that can tarnish his pride, especially since he is the commander-in-chief of the king. Like the narrative below, when Wiraguna finds out that Rara Mendut and Pranacitra run away from the palace, Wiraguna wants to catch up with them on his own but Nyai Ajeng

restrains him.

*“Tuanku Wiraguna, jangan memburu sekarang. Tidak pantas bagi seorang panglima besar kerajaan, malam-malam memburu perempuan di luar. Esok pagi kita masih dapat mengatur siast.”* [His Majesty Wiraguna, do not hunt them now. It is not proper for a commander-in-chief of the kingdom to hunt women outside at night. Tomorrow morning, we can still work out a tactic.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 308)

Nyai Ajeng, the good wife, reminds her husband, Wiraguna, not to be emotional and take harmful actions towards Rara Mendut and Pranacitra. The reason is if Wiraguna does the careless action can tarnish his own dignity.

Nyai Ajeng’s care, later, expands to Rara Mendut. After seeing the struggle of Rara Mendut to be free, Nyai Ajeng begins to sympathize with her. Nyai Ajeng’s care begins with the realization and recognition that the freedom Rara Mendut wants is a woman’s rights. On the contrary, she has obligatory rights as a wife and mother, but she is not able to fulfill.

*Kemenangan Rara Mendut pada hakekatnya kemenangan kaum wanita juga. Hal itu sangat terasa oleh Nyai Ajeng, yang selain wanita cantik, bernalar cerdas juga. Ada dalam diri seorang istri, yang mendorongnya membela suami. Akan tetapi dalam banyak segi, setelah kedudukan dan penghargaan selaku istri ataupun ibu tercapai, maka segi wanitalah yang akan lebih berbicara. Bagaimanapun, Rara mendut dalam mata Nyai Ajeng toh semacam pahlawan juga.* [Rara Mendut’s victory was essentially a women’s victory as well. Nyai Ajeng, besides being a beautiful woman, has intelligent reasoning.

It was in a wife which pushed her to defend her husband. However, in many respects, after the positions and respect, as a wife or mother, are achieved, the woman's side will speak more. However, in Nyai Ajeng's point of view, Rara Mendut looked like a hero too] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 249)

As the author narrates Nyai Ajeng's point of view that women also have rights that are often forgotten or ignored in society, Nyai Ajeng begins to support Mendut's actions and thinks that Mendut is a hero. Nyai Ajeng's words below prove that she would do what Mendut does in that situation.

*"Mendut! Mendut! Kau seimbang denganku. Ya, kau seimbang dengan Nyai Ajeng. Seandainya aku dalam keadannmu ya, ya kukira aku akan bertindak yang sama juga."* ["Mendut! Mendut! You're equal to me. Yes, you are equal to Nyai Ajeng. If I were you, I think I would do the same."] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 298)

Nyai Ajeng is an example of a developing character who initially does not like Rara Mendut. Later, she turns out to be a person who cares about what Rara Mendut does.

*Semoga siasat Nyai Ajeng berhasil, semoga Mendut menemukan kebahagiaannya.*

*Nyai Ajeng memberi intruksi kepada Penatus Jagapura, komandan pasukan pengawal, agar jangan keras-keras menjaga Rara Mendut.* [Nyai Ajeng hopes that her tactic is successful, and hopes Mendut can find her happiness. Nyai Ajeng gave instructions to Penatus Jagapura, the commander of the guard's troops, not to be so hard at guarding Rara Mendut.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p.

299)

Cares about Rara Mendut causes Nyai Ajeng to contribute to the capital for Rara Mendut's sales of cigarettes.

*Bahkan Nyai Ajeng pun menunjukkan kebaikan hatinya. Beliau dengan murah hati menyumbang modal nisbi bear berjumlah dua puluh lima real untuk usaha warung rokok Mendut. [Nyai Ajeng showed her kindness. She generously donated a relative capital of twenty-five reals for the Mendut cigarette shop business.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 187)*

In the end, Nyai Ajeng begins to help Rara Mendut escape from the palace. Nyai Ajeng devises several plans for Mendut's freedom. Nyai Ajeng cooperates with the guards so as not to be harsh on Rara Mendut. Based on the evidence above, Nyai Ajeng can be said to have the feminine characteristics England (2011), such as being obedient, sensitive, and caring.

Interestingly, other than being obedient, sensitive, and caring, Mangunwijaya (2019) describes Nyai Ajeng as an intelligent woman too. There is no wonder that she becomes the King's commander's principal wife. *“Sudah wanita umur menjelang lohori, Nyai Ajeng, tetapi justru matang, wanita paling pandai di antara sekian istrinya.” [Nyai Ajeng, a woman already approaching ....., but mature, the most intelligent woman among his wives] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 65)*

Nyai Ajeng is intelligent in matters related to negotiations. One of the examples is when Nyai Ajeng negotiates the tax that Mendut needs to pay to Wiraguna. *“Apakah Panglima Mataram sudah jatuh miskin sampai membutuhkan duit dari seorang perempuan rampasan?” [Is the Mataram Commander fallen into poverty to the point*



of needing money from a woman?”] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 154)

Besides being intelligent, Nyai Ajeng is also disciplined, and skillful to do the palace arrangement. *Nyai Ajeng lebih praktis, lebih menguasai perkara-perkara tata istana yang sering tidak sederhana.* [Nyai Ajeng was more practical and has more control over palace administrative matters, which were often not simple] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 65). Nyai Ajeng’s intelligence and skill to negotiate can be read as a not-so-feminine characteristic. However, the intelligence and skill are used by Nyai Ajeng to fulfill her duty as a wife of a commander.

In general, Nyai Ajeng plays the role of a good wife who is obedient with her husband, Wiraguna. In the division of labor, she is a wife to Wiraguna and does domestic roles. According to England (2011) she has the feminine characteristics of being obedient, care and sensitive. She has a role that society idealizes as a good woman and good wife.

#### **4.1.4. Ni Semangka**

Ni Semangka, whose real name is Sri Wahyuni, is Rara Mendut’s chaperone who serves as a trusted maid in the House of Wiraguna. She teaches Rara Mendut the rules and courtesy. Ni Semangka is a widow. Her husband died because of a war, and she does not have a child. Ni Semangka considers Genduk Duku and Rara Mendut as her children. Like other mothers, she is described as a protective person towards her children.

Ni Semangka is protective of Rara Mendut and Genduk Duku. Ni Semangka was once married to a man whose husband worked for Adipati Pragola. Being a widow

makes many men only approach her with bad intentions. Therefore, she becomes alert and fierce toward men who speak disrespectfully to Rara Mendut and Genduk Duku.

*Tetapi celakanya, justru karena itulah berapa saja lelaki bahkan lalu menyelundup ingin menjadikannya sasaran nafsu. Sampai terlanjurlah Ni Semangka menjadi perempuan yang galak kalau dihadapkan pada lelaki. [But unfortunately, it was why many men even got in without permission and targeted her as a sexual object. That's why Ni Semangka become a fierce woman in front of men.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 34)*

Ni Semangka is protective of Rara Mendut and Genduk Duku because she cares about them. She intends to teach them to respect other people. As previously mentioned, caring is one of the stereotypical characteristics of being feminine.

Ni Semangka also teaches Rara Mendut and Genduk Duku to be good women to use polite language. On one occasion, when Genduk Duku calls a male servant by his nickname *geyol*, she scolds Genduk Duku for teaching Rara Mendut bad things.

*“Sudah berkali-kali saya katakan padamu, genduk, kau tidak boleh memakai kata olok-olok untuk pemuda-pemuda yang bergelar Raden bahkan Raden Mas. Geyol, Galundheng, Pohung, itu kan tidak pantas!” [“I have told you many times, genduk, you should not use the mockery word for the youths who have the title of Raden and even Raden Mas. Geyol, Galundheng, Pohung, that's not appropriate.”] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 21)*

Ni Semangka loves Genduk Duku and Rara Mendut. As a result, she gets offended when people make the two girls sad. It is not uncommon for Ni Semangka to be fierce when Genduk Duku teaches Rara Mendut weird things. For example, Ni Semangka

admonishes Genduk Duku and wants to take Rara Mendut riding a horse so she can escape. *“Genduk! Genduk Duku! Awas kau, Duku, kalau kau mengajak puanmu berbuat hal-hal yang berbahaya.”* [“Genduk! Genduk Duku! I warn you, Duku, don't ask your lady to do dangerous things.”] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 50). Another example of Ni Semangka's protectiveness in the novel is when Ni Semangka warns Genduk Duku who persuades Rara Mendut to run away because Wiraguna increases the cigarette taxes. *“Husy! Lari dengan apa. Omong nggak genah.”* [“Hush! Run away with what. Talking inappropriate.”] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 60)

Like a mother, in many parts of the scenes, she shows her motherly trait by taking care of Rara Mendut and Genduk Duku.

Ni Semangka indeed becomes a mother for Rara Mendut. On one occasion, when Ni Semangka sees Rara Mendut sleeping, she feels concerned for Rara Mendut, who is forced to become the wife of Wiraguna. Ni Semangka knows that living in Mataram means that Rara Mendut, the spoil of war, needs to comply with the rules and orders of the royal family in power. *“Ni Semangka hanya merangkul Mendut, dan penuh keibuan ia berpesan, “Kita hanya perempuan rampasan belaka...”* [Ni Semangka hugged Mendut, and full of motherly love, she said, “We are just the spoils of war...”] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 142)

Ni Semangka, like a mother, supports Rara Mendut in every way she can. She tries to comfort Rara Mendut after Mendut argues with Nyai Ajeng, who forces her to accept the offer to be the wife of Wiraguna. Ni Semangka hugs Mendut and wipes her tears. She does so because she cares about Rara Mendut.

*“Bagaimanapun rasa keibuan Ni Semangka lebih kuat daripada rasa ketaatan kepada pembesar. Walaupun masih sulit untuk memahami sikap puannya yang nekad, akan tetapi bila sudah jelas “anak”-nya terjepit minta tolong, mana ada wanita yang tidak membalik, lalu mati-matian membela yang tersayang.”*[However, Ni Semangka’s motherly feeling was stronger than obedience to the prominent person. Even though it was still difficult to understand Mendut’s desperate attitude, when it was clear that her “child” is stuck asked for help, how could there be a woman who did not turn around and then desperately defends her beloved one.”] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 187)

Even when she does not understand Mendut’s intention, Ni Semangka helps Mendut to shop for cigarettes and all the things needed. She always accompanies Mendut when she sells those things around the villages, even though Ni Semangka realizes that selling cigarette butt is inappropriate for a woman who will become the future wife of Wiraguna.

In general, Ni Semangka plays the role of a good feminine woman who cares about the people she loves. In the division of labor, she is a mother to Rara Mendut and Genduk Duku. According to England (2011) concluded that she has the feminine characteristics of being protective and motherly. She has a role that society idealizes as a good woman, a mother, and a wife.

#### **4.1.5. Putri Arumardi**

Putri Arumardi, Wiraguna’s other wife, is helpful and kind. She is obedient to the rules and surrenders to her fate. She becomes a trusted and close friend of Rara

Mendut. The narrative below shows when Putri Arumardi first meets Rara Mendut. She offers to be Rara Mendut's best friend. Rara Mendut asks her if she likes the palace. Putri Arumardi answers, "*Bagaimana ya? Dikatakan betah, rasanya tidak, tetapi nyatanya disini terus.*" ["What can I say? I can say that I like to stay here, but it does not feel like that, but in fact, I still stay here."] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 122).

Putri Arumardi's answer shows how she feels about living in the palace. Further in the story, Arumardi's reason for living in the palace is explained. She does not feel like rebelling because she has been living in the palace for a long time. She knows how cruel people who have power in society are. She feels it is useless for her to rebel. She chooses to surrender to her fate. However, in the case of Rara Mendut, she cannot keep quiet.

*Arumardi sendiri sudah kehabisan selera mengenai hak-hak waris dan hidup dalam kemewahan puri. ... Arumardi sudah belajar pasrah, tetapi toh tidak bisa ia pasrah dengan peristiwa-peristiwa hidup kaum istana yang dirasakannya kejam sewenang-wenang.* [Arumardi had given up her desire for inheritance rights, and she chose to live luxuriously in the palace.... Arumardi had learned to surrender, yet she could not surrender to the other incident of the life of the courtiers, which she felt are arbitrarily cruel.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 136)

The other narrative that shows Arumardi's surrender can be seen below. It is when Arumardi only abides by society's rules that women cannot decide what they want.

*Arumardi yang masih belum berniat tidur, melihat semua itu dari gandhoknya. Sedih mengingat nasibnya, tetapi ikhlas. Berlinang-linang air mata. Alangkah*

*indah dicintai oleh seseorang yang dipilihnya sendiri. Ah, selayaknya, ya, seharusnya wanita boleh dan mau memilih. Seperti Mendut itu.* [Arumardi, who still did not intend to sleep, saw all this from her room. She was sad to remember her fate but she surrendered. Tears welling up. How beautiful it was to be loved by someone of her own choosing. Ah, right, yes, women should be able and willing to choose. As Mendut does.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 303)

Arumardi is also described as a kind person. Putri Arumardi's kindness is shown to Rara Mendut when Mendut wants to escape from the court with Pranacitra. Putri Arumardi is invited by Rara Mendut to run away from the palace. Although Putri Arumardi refuses to run away with Rara Mendut, she implicitly advises Rara Mendut not to have any regret like her.

*“Tetapi kau, adikku sayang, kau anak lautan. Jangan! Jangan melawan keyakinanmu. Bayangkan bagaimana perasaan Arumardi, bila setiap hari nanti melihat kau menderita, hanya demi aku. Ah, semoga Allah yang maha bijaksana menghapus gagasan semacam itu, berapapun mulianya.”* [But you, my dear sister, do not go against your beliefs. Just think how Arumardi would feel if she sees you suffer every day, just think of me. Ah, May God of all wisdom lead you out of such ideas, however noble they may be.”] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 283)

Another description of Arumardi's kindness is shown in Mangunwijaya's narration of Arumardi and Rara Mendut's heartfelt friendship. When they are about to separate, they feel grateful to know each other. Arumardi promises to help Mendut when she needs it. *“Jika kau membutuhkan pertolongan Arumardi, yakinlah adik,*



*segala pertolongan dariku akan dapat adik andalkan*” [“If you need Arumardi’s help, believe me, you can rely on me for all helps.”] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 287).

Putri Arumardi helps Pranacitra and Rara Mendut hide in her room so they are not caught by the guards who try to arrest them both.

*Arumardi berkata kepada Nyai Ajeng “Tadi aku melihat mereka berdua pergi ke kandang-kandang kuda.” Lekas-lekas Putri Arumardi masuk gandhoknya dan memberi tanda. Secepat badai, Pranacitra dan Rara Mendut yang oleh kewaspadaan Arumardi disembunyikan dalam gandhoknya berlari keluar.*

[Arumardi said to Nyai Ajeng “I saw the two of them going to the stables.” Immediately Putri Arumardi entered her room and gave a signal. As fast as a storm, Pranacitra and Rara Mendut, who because of Arumardi’s vigilance was hidden in her room, ran out.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 308)

In short, Putri Arumardi has feminine characteristics of being helpful and kind. She is also obedient to the rules and surrenders to her condition because she feels that she could not do everything. Like Nyai Ajeng, she also focuses more on her domestic roles because she is one of Wiraguna’s other wives.

#### **4.1.6. Nyai Singabarong**

Nyai Singabarong is the mother of Pranacitra. She is a widow and became a single parent after her husband died. She runs a shipping business to transport goods from one island to another island. She is a successful businesswoman, but also a good mother who loves her son. The narrative below shows the motherly nature of Nyai Singabarong. When Nyai Singabarong calls Rara Mendut “a fisherman girl” and

makes Pranacitra thinks that her mother hates Rara Mendut, Nyai Singabarong shares her opinion about how to treat a woman fairly, *“Ibumu tidak benci. Hanya janganlah terlalu memberi harapan-harapan tanpa dasar kepada seorang gadis.”* [“Your mother does not hate it. Just do not give a girl too baseless expectation.”] (Manguwijaya, 2019, p.175)

During Nyai Singabarong’s and Pranacitra’s argument about which women will be chosen in the future, Pranacitra wants to choose Rara Mendut. Still, Nyai Singabarong wants another woman who is considered more worthy. Nyai Singabarong’s words show how she loves her son and cares about her son’s future. *“Jangan gusar, anakku. Semua yang ibumu katakan hanyalah demi kebaikanmu”* [“Do not be upset, my son. Everything your mother said was for your own good.”] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 176)

Here, Nyai Singabarong has the role of a businesswoman and a mother. The feminine characteristic that Nyai Singabarong has is only motherly. Interestingly, in the division or labor, Nyai Singabarong has domestic and public roles. The domestic one is she is the mother who takes care of the children that are Pranacitra and the public role is when she continues her husband’s work.

#### **4.1.7. Ni Kuweni**

Ni Kuweni is the trusted chaperone of Wiraguna. In the story, Ni Kuweni is trusted to solve the problems in the palace.

*Selain itu dari pengalaman bahwa ternyata banyak hal yang sulit diungkapkan oleh Panglima Wiraguna maupun pihak para garwa, lebih mudah dibereskan sebelum terlambat melalui perantara sang Dayang Kuweni.* [Besides, from the

experience, it turned out that there were many things that were difficult to be expressed by the Commander of Wiraguna and also his wives. It was easier to be solved by Kuweni before it was too late.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 130)

Ni Kuweni is a very devoted woman. She provides her service as a form of devotion. Not just any woman can do the job, especially for a great commander.

*Baiklah, jasa yang sebaik mungkin dapat disumbangkan Ni Kuweni ialah pengabdian dalam hal-hal yang sangat remeh:.... Tetapi jangan lupa: tidak sembarang wanita. Ya, begitulah. Kebahagiaan Ni Kuweni justru disitulah: embok-embok abdi seorang Panglima Besar Mataram.* [Well, the best service that Ni Kuweni could contribute was her dedication to very small things. But did not forget: not just any woman, Yes, that was so. Ni Kuweni's happiness was precisely there: the servant-carriers of a Mataram Commander-in-Chief] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 129)

Ni Kuweni does, among others, manage the Wiraguna's personal belongings, arrange his beverage and food, and even bathe and arrange the clothes Wiraguna wears. Ni Kuweni cares about Wiraguna. She is being careful in giving answers to questions asked by Wiraguna. One of the examples is when Wiraguna and Ni Kuweni talk about who should be chosen as Wiraguna's wife.

*"Hamba bukan penasihat kenegaraan seorang Panglima Mataram, Kanjeng. tetapi sebagai seorang perempuan yang sudah banyak melihat matahari menanjak dan tenggelam, pada hemat Kuweni yang dina, wanita seperti Nyai Ajeng-lah yang pantas Kanjeng."* ["I am not state advisor to a Mataram Commander, Kanjeng, but as a woman who has seen many sunrises and

sunsets, in the opinion of the younger Kuweni, women like Nyai Ajeng are worthy, *Kanjeng.*”] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 130)

The feminine characteristics that Ni Kuweni has is nurturing. Besides that, she also has the internal role of a caretaker when she is trusted by Wiraguna for solving problems.

With the exception of Rara Mendut, other characters' roles fall into the stereotypical roles associated with femininity and the stereotypical labor division roles. The stereotypical roles of femininity are when women are expected to be, for example, obedient, gentle, and dependent—the stereotypical traits of a “good” woman. Meanwhile, the stereotypical roles of labor division are wives, housewives, and mothers.

#### **4.2. The Javanese society shapes women's roles**

In Javanese patriarchal society, there is a term, saying that a wife is “*kanca wingking.*” This term literally means “wife as the friend in the back.” Women are seen as friends who manage the household, especially the ones who take care of children, cook, wash and others. The other popular terms for a woman in Javanese society namely 3M, have a child (*manak*), cook (*masak*), and dress up (*macak*). In addition, in the context of Javanese society, the word for woman is *wanita* which is the abbreviation of “*wani di tata*” (eager to be commanded)”. Thus, it appears that in the Javanese culture, women as a person of a different gender, which must be regulated by the men.

In the novel *Rara Mendut*, all female characters have their own roles. The novel which has set time in the seventeenth century, which is the setting place is in Java, also

has its own characteristics in each of its female characters. Y.B Manguwijaya, as Rara Mendut's novel writer, builds up each character in the story by having a different role and also based on how society views the role and position of women at that time.

In the novel *Rara Mendut*, there is a conversation about how women in the seventeenth century should behave and act, especially in that century which was still an extreme cultural custom in society. An example of proof in the novel is when the women from the coast are talking about how their life is. "*Memasak saya bisa juga. Mencuci, membersihkan rumah juga bisa...*" ["I can cook too. Washing, cleaning the house and others...."] (Manguwijaya, 2019, p. 5). The conversation implies that a woman who is not even married must be able to master one of the 3M, namely *Manak*, *Macak*, dan *Masak*. The role that is embraced is the household chores (cooking, washing, and cleaning the house), which are considered as a woman's responsibility in the household.

In the novel *Rara Mendut*, not all female characters have characters such as women who are coveted or desired by society. One of the examples is Rara Mendut. She rejects the role of women expected by society, namely, that women should obey the King's orders. According to Widyastuti (2014) in *Kepribadian Wanita Jawa*, from a socio-cultural background, there is a tradition of kings, as well as other royal family members, for having the principal wife and many concubines. The example of evidence below is the point of view of Ni Semangka, Rara Mendut's chaperone when she abides to the kingdom rules and has the role of a good mother and a good wife. *Keterlualan! Mosok, dipinang jadi istri panglima besar negara kuasa kok menolak. Itu ajaran dari*

*siapa!* [Outrageous! How can someone refuse to be the wife of the commander-in-chief of the country? Whose teaching is that!] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 161). Ni Semangka is surprised by women like Rara Mendut, who dare to refuse orders from state authorities. Ni Semangka, who is described as a woman who obeys the rules, thinks that orders from men or superiors must be obeyed. Hartiningsih (2009) in the *Serat Wulangreh Putri, Pupuh Mijil, 10 Pada* explained that, “You are my daughter, I advise, heavy matters, two great things, namely: the first is the king’s commandment, the second is the husband’s, the same severe.” *Serat Wulangreh Putri* is a literary work in Javanese that contains advice on the attitude of a woman in accompanying her husband.

According to Lantara (2015), women have two functions, those are, external roles and internal roles. External roles are when women become members of civil rights and politics, while internal roles are when women have roles as a mother in the family and wives in the husband-and-wife household. In the novel, there is a proof that shows a difference between men and women in society. “*aah lagi. Laut itu dunia lelaki. Perempuan di darat tempatnya.*” [“aahhh, the sea is men’s world, meanwhile the woman’s place is on the land.”] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 8)

In the novel context, the setting in the novel is on the coast where men generally work as fishermen. Women are considered inappropriate to work in the sea, and they are better off working on land. Thus, women are considered better to have an internal role of working on land, which means staying at home as housewives rather than working outside.

Other examples show there is an unfair division between men and women, especially in Javanese society in the seventeenth century but considered the division



already as a normal thing.

*Tokoh-tokoh yang berjongkok di kalangan adu jago adalah pria. Tetapi yang menanak nasi, yang mengurus anak dan ternak adalah kaum wanita.* [Those who are crouched in the cockfight arena are men. But those who cook rice, and take care of children and livestock are women] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 168)

This evidence shows that some roles have become mandatory for women, namely 3M (*Macak, Masak, Manak*). In society, women are expected to be able to cook and take care of children and livestock. Kingdom and patriarchal Javanese culture strongly influenced Javanese society in the seventeenth century. The role of women who are carried out is the role of women as housewives and mothers in the family, “...*saya kira dia hanya tahu menanak nasi dan mencuci pakaian.*” [“... I think she only knows how to cook rice and do laundry.”] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 246).

In the novel, it is often mentioned how women should behave in Javanese society, especially when Rara Mendut defies the existing customs. While reading the novel, two different points of view can be found. Firstly, women follow the customs and traditions of seventeen-century women. Secondly, women do not follow custom and traditions. Based on the setting time used in the seventeenth century, Rara Mendut defies the concept of what an ideal woman in the Javanese society. Here is an example in the novel which shows how women in the seventeenth century should behave as expected by society.

*“Jer wanita utama pindhha pendhita, jatmika sayogyanya” begitu pedoman umum wanita baik budi bagaikan pendeta, sopan halus sebaiknya.*” [“Jer wanita utama

pindhha pendhita, jatmika sayogyanya” That’s the general rule of a kind woman, she should be like a priest, polite and gentle.”] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 192)

The context of the above quotation is when people, especially women see Rara Mendut doing a sexy dance while selling cigarettes. People will think that Rara Mendut’s activities do not conform to the concept of the idealized women of society at that time.

In the *Serat Piwulang Estri*-the teachings of how the Javanese women are expected by society, it is explained that there are three parables in three *suluk* to teach women in their relationship with their husbands or as prospective mothers. One of the *suluk*, *Suluk Batik* discusses the idealized female character. One *suluk* said that “Women should have a subtle basic character” (Wulandari, 2016, p.11). A woman who has a basic character or is gentle and kind can be considered an ideal woman.

According to Widyastuti (2014), men are priests, leaders, and also kings. Wives must obey their husband’s orders, be loyal, and devoted, and must fully understand the husband’s needs in order to serve him. That is the image of idealized women by Javanese society. Especially society at that time, which had a patriarchal Javanese culture and was led by a king, so that all the words of the husband had to be obeyed, no matter what the request was, otherwise she would be considered defiant to the husband or the society in the seventeenth century. Here is an example of how women are idealized by male characters at the time.

*Perempuan ada dua macam, yang menikmati dan yang disuruh kerja. Dan menikmati artinya yang tidak terlalu merepotkan. Dikasih uang, pakaian, atau perhiasan sajalah, dan kenikmatan kauperoleh. Kalau dia tidak mau, seperti Rara dari Pati itu.* [There are two kinds of women, those who luxuriate

and those who are asked to work. The luxurious one means that she is not too troublesome. Just give her money, clothes, or jewelry, and you get pleasure. If she does not want to, she will be like Rara from Pati. ] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 196)

The context is when Rara Mendut refuses to be taken as a wife by Wiraguna even though so far no one has ever refused to be married to him. Therefore, Wiraguna feels angry and Rara Mendut is considered rebellious. According to Widyastuti (2014), in Javanese tradition, it is very easy for a king to divorce his wife or concubine if he wishes. However, for women in the past, it seemed as if it was a matter of pride if they were married to a prince or king. As a result, there is a view that women are only sexual objects. The proof that women are sexual objects can be seen in the habit of polygamy. In the context of the evidence, Wiraguna as a male character is described as preferring women who are “luxurious” namely those who are always obedient to their husband’s orders and can serve their sexual needs. The role of women in this context is a woman as a wife who serves her husband.

The example of the evidence below is the role of women as wives in serving their husbands. The context below is Nyai Ajeng, who in this story has a role as a good wife. Nyai Ajeng serves her husband preparing dinner, even though in the story, Nyai Ajeng and Wiraguna had been hostile before, but because Nyai Ajeng has the nature of a good woman, she continues to carry out her obligations. *“Kakanda, perkenankan Nyai Ajeng mempersiapkan makanan petang bagi Kakanda.”* [“Majesty, allow Nyai Ajeng to prepare the evening meal for you.”] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 253). As written in Serat Wulangreh Putri, Pupuh Kinanthi, 31 Pada, “It is mandatory to obey

your husband, do not interfere with the will of your husband, even though the king's son, serve your husband, must be truly filial." Nyai Ajeng's roles are in accordance with the Javanese Society's idealized role as a good wife.

Javanese women have a strong label about their femininity. In the labeling of women who are often called stereotypes, there is the labeling of Javanese women who are delicate, soft, and good at makeup. Javanese society has a stereotype that Javanese women should be delicate women causes women to be creatures who need to be fulfilled by men. Furthermore, people begin to assume that women are not as strong as men to do work and earn a living in fulfilling their daily needs. That stereotype makes the roles and positions of women become followers. Women are considered to be a second class. *Kedudukan wanita memang harus dibelakang.* [The position of women must be behind men.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 249)

There is proof in the novel above, in Nyai Ajeng's point of view. It is stated that women, especially when they already have a husband, the position of women is only followers because the husband is the head of the family and the controller of the household. In that context, Nyai Ajeng realizes that although in her heart she agrees with what Rara Mendut is doing, which is to be free, she realizes that she has become a wife who had to obey her husband. That is the role of women idealized by the Javanese society. Another example that shows women as a follower and as second-class is when Putri Arumardi knows Mendut can live in her choice and can choose someone that she loves. Putri Arumardi realizes that will be happy if women have a right to choose. *Ah, selayaknya, ya, seharusnya wanita boleh dan mau memilih.* [Ah, Women should be able and willing to choose.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 303)

In the seventeenth century, patriarchal culture was still very strong in Javanese society. Men became leaders in all fields, and women had to obey their husbands. There is a term that says that “Women cannot go to high school, they will end up in the kitchen.” The example of the evidence below states that women should not be too smart because it will be difficult to get a husband.

*“Kau gadis terlalu cerdas,” kata Bolu. “Kelak sulit mendapatkan suami. Seperti telur ini, terlalu keras, sulit jadi ayam.”* [“You’re a too smart girl,” said Bolu. “It will be difficult to find a husband. Like this egg, too hard, hard to be a chicken.] (Mangunwijaya, 2019, p. 223)

