



WOMEN AS GUARDIANS OF NATURE'S FERTILITY IN THE LEGEND OF DEWI SRI: AN ECOFEMINIST STUDY

*Perempuan sebagai Penjaga Kesuburan Alam dalam Legenda Dewi Sri:
Kajian Ekofeminisme*

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the representation of women, the representation of nature, and the relationship between women and nature in the legend of Dewi Sri based on an ecofeminist analysis. This study is motivated by the importance of literary studies that explore the relationship between women and the environment in the folklore of the Indonesian archipelago. The legend of Dewi Sri was chosen because it presents women as symbols of fertility and guardians of the survival of agrarian communities. This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive-analytical method. The data sources consist of the text of the Dewi Sri legend obtained through a literature review. Data collection was conducted using the observe-and-record technique, while data analysis utilized an interactive analysis model encompassing data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study indicate that women in the legend of Dewi Sri are represented as symbols of life, fertility, and protectors of agrarian communities. Nature is represented as a source of life, a spiritual space, and a symbol of community well-being. The relationship between women and nature in the legend of Dewi Sri demonstrates a harmonious connection built upon the values of fertility, protection, care, and the sustainability of life. The ecofeminist perspective in this legend demonstrates that women and nature are two interrelated elements crucial to maintaining the balance of life in the agrarian communities of the Nusantara. This study is expected to contribute to the development of ecofeminist studies in Indonesian oral literature, particularly in Nusantara folklore.

Keywords: nature; ecofeminism; the legend of Dewi Sri; women; oral literature

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan representasi perempuan, representasi alam, serta relasi perempuan dan alam dalam legenda Dewi Sri berdasarkan kajian ekofeminisme. Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh pentingnya kajian sastra yang mengungkap hubungan antara perempuan dan lingkungan dalam folklor Nusantara. Legenda Dewi Sri dipilih karena menghadirkan perempuan sebagai simbol kesuburan dan penjaga keberlangsungan hidup masyarakat agraris. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif analitis. Sumber data penelitian berupa teks legenda Dewi Sri yang diperoleh melalui studi pustaka. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan teknik simak dan catat, sedangkan teknik analisis data menggunakan model analisis interaktif yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perempuan dalam legenda Dewi Sri direpresentasikan sebagai simbol kehidupan, kesuburan, dan pelindung masyarakat agraris. Alam direpresentasikan sebagai sumber kehidupan, ruang spiritual, dan simbol kesejahteraan masyarakat. Relasi perempuan dan alam dalam legenda Dewi Sri menunjukkan hubungan harmonis yang dibangun melalui nilai kesuburan, perlindungan, kepedulian,

dan keberlanjutan hidup. Perspektif ekofeminisme dalam legenda ini memperlihatkan bahwa perempuan dan alam merupakan dua unsur penting yang saling berkaitan dalam menjaga keseimbangan kehidupan masyarakat agraris Nusantara. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan kontribusi terhadap pengembangan kajian ekofeminisme dalam sastra lisan Indonesia, khususnya pada folklor Nusantara.

Kata-kata kunci: alam; ekofeminisme; legenda Dewi Sri; perempuan; sastra lisan

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INTRODUCTION

A literary work does not merely emerge from the author's aesthetic imagination; rather, it constitutes an active response to the social realities and environmental crises occurring in the surrounding environment. Literature possesses a crucial ecological function because it can foster human consciousness to nurture and maintain a harmonious relationship with nature (Rahmawati et al., 2023). In its development, the dynamics of literary criticism have given rise to the ecofeminist approach, which discerns a close correlation between environmental exploitation and the oppression of women by the patriarchal system for the sake of power (Wulandari et al., 2022). According to seminal ecofeminist thinkers such as Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies (2021), this perspective posits that the capitalistic and patriarchal mode of domination that destroys ecosystems stems from the exact same logic of masculine dominance over the female body.. This perspective posits that the capitalistic mode of domination that destroys ecosystems stems from the exact same logic of masculine dominance over the female body (Putri & Ramadhan, 2025).

The application of ecofeminism within the corpus of modern Indonesian literature has been widely utilized to critically unearth various socio-ecological phenomena. This approach has successfully deconstructed the spiritual closeness of female characters to the sea (Arifin et al., 2025). Furthermore, green literature is also employed to voice critiques of environmental degradation, which is manifested through the symbol of the river (D. P. Sari et al., 2025). Moving further, researchers have explored the interconnectedness between the female body and nature (Fitriani et al., 2024), as well as examined the role of women as both victims and protectors against exploitation within contemporary novels (Maulidina et al., 2023). Not limited to prose, this ecofeminist perspective has expanded to analyze the relationships among women, nature, and power in dramatic texts (Gultom et al., 2024), and even women's resistance in defending their living spaces through the medium of documentary films (Simanjuntak & Lubis, 2022).

On the other hand, the perspective of contemporary ecofeminist criticism has currently begun to penetrate the realm of Nusantara folklore. In various folktales, female characters are frequently portrayed sacredly as symbols of fertility in agrarian societies, while simultaneously holding the key to maintaining ecological balance (Handayani & R, 2021). This representation indicates that since ancient times, traditional culture has placed female figures in a highly revered position regarding the management of a community's ecological relations (P. Lestari et al., 2023). Although the treasury of oral literature in Indonesia has proven to be remarkably rich in traditional ecological values (Sulastri et al., 2022), studies employing ecofeminism as an analytical tool within this domain of folk literature remain profoundly limited.

Prior research concerning the legend of Dewi Sri, for instance, has thus far been dominated by the spiritual-ecological perspective of indigenous communities within actual agricultural rituals (Ulifia, 2024). Reading the legendary text as an oral literary work that carries an ideological mission of environmental emancipation has not been extensively explored.

Consequently, local narratives frequently become trapped in the romanticism of myth without having their agency unpacked within the corpus of Indonesian environmental literature (Harahap & Siregar, 2023). Therefore, a robust theoretical deconstruction is required to discern how ecosystem preservation can be constructed through the values of care toward both women and nature simultaneously (Zulfikar et al., 2023).

This research gap, or vacuum of focus, underscores the significance of conducting this study. This research aims to describe the representation of women, the representation of nature, and to explain the relationship between the two in the legend of Dewi Sri based on an ecofeminist perspective. The novelty of this study lies in shifting the focus of ecofeminist analysis from the dominance of modern texts toward oral literature rooted in local wisdom. Through this approach, the position of the figure of Dewi Sri is deconstructed so that she is not merely a passive theological myth of fertility, but rather an active representation of a balanced, harmonious relationship between women and the environment within the agrarian culture of the Indonesian archipelago.

Accordingly, the results of this study are expected to provide a significant new contribution to the development of Indonesian literary criticism based on local folklore. Theoretically, this paper expands the horizons of ecofeminist literary studies, which have previously tended to rely on modern novels or poetry. Practically, this analysis can serve as a theoretical reference in understanding how Nusantara oral texts can be revitalized into the foundation of contemporary environmental ethics to curb the pace of the global ecological crisis.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Ecofeminism in Literature

Ecofeminism is a critical theory that links the oppression of women to the exploitation of the environment by patriarchal systems of power (Purbandani & Mahaswa, 2022). Environmental degradation is believed to be dichotomously inseparable from gender subordination that marginalizes the rights of women (Anwar & Fitriani, 2022). Hence, this perspective positions women as active subjects who possess ecological awareness as well as strong emotional and spiritual proximity to nature (Kurniasih, 2023). Within the realm of literary criticism, the ecofeminist approach is utilized to dismantle how a text represents environmental relations, symbols, narratives, and conflicts that directly impact women's lives (Syahputra & Amelia, 2023). This theory is highly relevant for unearthing the values of care and the sustainability of life, particularly within the culture of agrarian societies that place gender and ecological harmony as the foundation of existential balance (Maulana & Rahmah, 2024).

Representations of Women and Nature in Literature

The representation of women in the realm of modern literature has shifted from merely passive domestic objects into active subjects in maintaining human values and environmental sustainability (Y. Lestari et al., 2023). This phenomenon aligns with the reflective function of literature, which is capable of recording and depicting human experiences profoundly when facing social changes or ecological crises (Rahman et al., 2022). On the other hand, nature within a text is no longer positioned merely as a physical setting, but is present as a space for environmental wisdom, a spiritual symbol, and even a space for women's liberation from patriarchal dominance (Syarif, 2022). When manifested into Nusantara folklore, these representations merge harmoniously because female characters are frequently symbolized

through natural elements such as land, water, and rice, which function as community protectors and guardians of traditional ecosystem balance (Setiawan et al., 2024).

The Legend of Dewi Sri

Legends, as a part of oral literature, play a highly crucial role in constructing cultural awareness and transmitting moral and ecological values across generations (Fitrahayunitisna et al., 2022). One concrete manifestation of this is the legend of Dewi Sri in Javanese and Sundanese cultures, where she is positioned as an agrarian mythological mother figure. Through the lens of ecofeminism, the character of Dewi Sri does not merely serve as a theological symbol for land fertility and harvest success; rather, she morphs into the center of a narrative that demonstrates how harmonious relationships, equality, and the unification between women and the environment are constructed within the oral tradition of the archipelago (Fitrahayunitisna et al., 2022).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method to understand and describe the meanings, symbols, and relations between women and nature in the text of the Dewi Sri legend based on an ecofeminist perspective. According to Sugiyono (2022), qualitative research is a method used to understand social and cultural phenomena in depth through the analysis of descriptive data consisting of words, sentences, and meanings. This approach was selected because the object under study is an oral literary text that requires deep interpretation and analysis of the narrative content.

The primary material object and data source in this study consist of written data specifically obtained from the text of the Dewi Sri legend by Rumidjah and Jumeiri in the book titled *Dewi Sri: Ceritera Rakyat dari Daerah Surakarta, Jawa Tengah* (Rumidjah & Jumeiri, 1984). The research data comprise narrative excerpts, setting descriptions, and dialogues between characters in the text that indicate elements of women, nature, and their interconnectedness based on ecofeminist variables.

The data collection techniques incorporate library research and the look and note (*simak-catat*) technique. According to Sugiyono et al. (2022), library research is a method of data collection conducted through the examination of written sources such as books, journals, and scientific documents to obtain information relevant to the study. Furthermore, the look-and-note technique is operated by repeatedly reading the text of the Dewi Sri legend in the book by Rumidjah & Jumeiri (1984), scrutinizing critical segments, and subsequently recording and classifying them into a data classification matrix.

In this qualitative study, the researcher acts as the primary instrument (*human instrument*) who functions to determine the focus, collect, analyze, and interpret the data. The data analysis technique adopts the interactive analysis model by Miles et al. (2020), which states that qualitative data analysis is conducted interactively and proceeds continuously through three main stages. First, data reduction is performed by selecting, sorting, and focusing on textual excerpts relevant to ecofeminist variables. Second, data display is carried out through a narrative-descriptive text format so that the relationships between data can be easily comprehended. Third, conclusion drawing or verification is conducted based on the results of the deep interpretation of the displayed data. Lastly, to ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the interpretive results, this study applies the theoretical triangulation technique by comparing the results of the analysis using several theories and theoretical references related to ecofeminism and literary feminism.

DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of research on the representation of women, the representation of nature, and the relationship between women and nature in the legend of Dewi Sri by Rumidjah and Jumeiri, as found in the book *Dewi Sri: Folk Tales from the Surakarta Region, Central Java* (1984). The analysis was conducted using an ecofeminist framework to examine the relationship between women and nature in folk literary texts. The research focuses on how female characters are represented, how nature is depicted in the story, and how the relationship between the two shapes the meaning of life for agrarian communities in the Indonesian archipelago.

Representations of Women in the Legend of Dewi Sri

Based on the analysis, the representation of women in the legend of Dewi Sri shows that women are portrayed as symbols of life, fertility, and guardians of the survival of agrarian communities. Dewi Sri is depicted as a compassionate and gentle woman who brings prosperity to humanity through rice, the community's primary food source. Dewi Sri's presence in the story is not merely understood as that of an ordinary woman but also as a sacred figure revered by the community because she is believed to have a close connection to soil fertility and the success of the harvest. This portrayal indicates that women are placed in a significant position within agrarian society because their existence is associated with the source of life, well-being, and the continuity of human existence. This is evident in the following excerpt:

Data 1

"Dari makam Dewi Sri kemudian tumbuh tanaman padi yang sangat bermanfaat bagi kehidupan manusia." (Rumidjah & Jumeiri, 1984, p. 47, sentence 3)

This quote from Data 1 indicates that women are represented as the source of life and prosperity for society. The presence of Dewi Sri is depicted as capable of bringing new life to humanity through the growth of rice plants, which serve as a symbol of well-being and the continuity of life in agrarian societies. In this legend, rice is not merely viewed as a food crop but as a symbol of life that determines the survival of humanity. Therefore, Dewi Sri's existence is positioned as the center of the community's well-being. This representation highlights that women hold a crucial role in sustaining community life, particularly within agrarian cultures heavily reliant on agricultural yields and natural fertility. Furthermore, the portrayal of Dewi Sri as the source of rice growth also reveals a symbolic connection between women and nature, which are interdependent in supporting human life.

Beyond being a symbol of life and fertility, Dewi Sri is also portrayed as a figure of sacrifice. In the legend, the emergence of food crops stems from the death of Dewi Sri, who subsequently gave birth to various plants beneficial to human life. This sacrifice signifies that women are viewed as playing a major role in bringing life and prosperity to society. This is evident in the following quote:

Data 2

"Pada bekas kubur Dewi Sri tumbuh berbagai macam tumbuh-tumbuhan yang dapat dimanfaatkan manusia untuk memenuhi kebutuhan hidupnya." (Rumidjah & Jumeiri, 1984, p. 48, second sentence)

Data excerpt 2 indicates that women are viewed as a source of life that benefits the survival of both humanity and nature. From Dewi Sri's sacrifice, various plants emerged that humans can utilize to meet their basic needs. This representation demonstrates that women are not only associated with gentleness and compassion, but also with sacrifice and the protection

of life. The figure of Dewi Sri is depicted as a being who gives of herself for the sake of the community's well-being. This depiction indicates that women in the agrarian cultures of the Nusantara are positioned as guardians of social and ecological harmony, as their presence is believed to maintain the balance between humans and nature. Furthermore, this representation also reflects the community's respect for women as figures who play a vital role in the continuity of communal life. The portrayal of women in the legend of Dewi Sri highlights the close connection between women and the source of life. From an ecofeminist perspective, women are viewed as having an emotional and spiritual closeness to nature because they both play a role in sustaining life. This aligns with those who state that ecofeminism positions women as symbols of care, sustainability, and protectors of ecological life (Purbandani & Mahaswa, 2022).

The figure of Dewi Sri, who gives birth to food crops from her body, symbolizes women as the source of nature's fertility. The symbolism of the female body as a source of life reflects the traditional view that women have a biological and spiritual connection with nature. Women in traditional Nusantara literature are often represented as symbols of life because they are seen as possessing the ability to give birth, nurture, and ensure the continuity of human life (Aminah, 2022).

The portrayal of Dewi Sri as the protector of agrarian communities also demonstrates that women hold a significant position in the agricultural culture of the Nusantara. In agrarian societies, women are often associated with activities such as food security, cultivation, and nurturing life. This aligns with the research, which notes that female figures in Nusantara folklore are frequently depicted as guardians of natural balance and protectors of community life (Setiawan et al., 2024).

Furthermore, Dewi Sri's sacrifice, which yields food crops, highlights the humanistic and ecological values within the legend. The transformation of a woman's body into a source of life illustrates a harmonious relationship between women and nature. The symbolism of women and nature in ecological literature indicates that women are viewed as part of nature, possessing the ability to maintain the balance of life (Setiawan & Wahyuni, 2023). Thus, the representation of women in the legend of Dewi Sri demonstrates that women are positioned as symbols of fertility, sources of life, and guardians of ecological harmony within the agrarian communities of the Nusantara.

Representations of Nature in the Legend of Dewi Sri

Based on the analysis, the representation of nature in the legend of Dewi Sri shows that nature is depicted as a source of life, a spiritual realm, and a symbol of well-being for agrarian communities. Nature is represented through rice, soil, plants, and the agricultural environment, all of which are closely linked to human life. In this legend, nature is understood not only as a place where humans meet their basic needs but also as a vital element that determines the survival of the community. The lives of the agrarian community in the story are highly dependent on the fertility of nature, particularly on the presence of rice as the primary food source. Therefore, nature is positioned as an element that must be protected, respected, and preserved to ensure the balance of human life.

In this legend, rice serves as the primary symbol of community life because it is viewed as the food source that ensures human survival. The presence of rice not only fulfills an economic function as a food staple but also embodies spiritual and cultural values revered by the community. Rice is positioned as a symbol of prosperity and well-being because its existence sustains the lives of the agrarian community. This is evident in the following quote:

Data 3

"Tanaman padi itu kemudian dipelihara dengan baik karena menjadi sumber makanan bagi kehidupan manusia." (Rumidjah & Jumeiri, 1984, p. 47, 5th sentence)

This quote from Data 3 indicates that nature is represented as a source of life that must be safeguarded and nurtured by humans. Rice is not merely viewed as an ordinary agricultural product but as a blessing of great significance for the survival of agrarian communities. This depiction demonstrates that communities possess an awareness of the need to protect nature, as human life depends on the natural resources obtained from it. This representation highlights the close relationship between humans and nature in the social life of the community. Furthermore, the reverence for rice also indicates that nature holds a significant position within the cultural system of the agrarian communities of the Nusantara, as it is believed to provide well-being and the means for human survival.

In addition to rice, the soil in the legend of Dewi Sri is represented as a sacred space of life possessing spiritual power. The fertility of the soil is believed to stem from the presence of Dewi Sri, so the community must maintain a harmonious relationship with nature. The soil is not merely viewed as a place where plants grow, but also as a space that gives birth to life and the well-being of the community. The existence of fertile soil serves as a vital symbol in agrarian life, as it determines the success of the harvest and the survival of humanity. This is evident in the following quote:

Data 4

"Dari tanah tempat Dewi Sri dimakamkan tumbuh berbagai tanaman yang bermanfaat bagi manusia." (Rumidjah & Jumeiri, 1984, p. 48, sentence 1)

This quote from Data 4 indicates that the soil is represented as an essential part of human life capable of providing well-being if properly cared for. The soil is depicted as having a close connection to human life because it yields various plants beneficial for the community's survival. This representation demonstrates that nature is not viewed merely as an object of exploitation but as a sacred space of life whose existence must be respected. This depiction indicates that agrarian communities hold an ecological perspective that positions nature as a partner in human life. The harmony of the relationship between humans and nature is considered vital because the well-being of the community is heavily dependent on the sustainability of the surrounding environment.

In the legend of Dewi Sri, nature is also depicted as having a spiritual connection with the community. Various forms of reverence for Dewi Sri reflect the belief that humans must live in harmony with nature. This reverence is expressed as an act of gratitude and an effort to preserve the fertility of nature so that the community may continue to prosper. The spiritual connection between humans and nature demonstrates that nature is viewed as possessing a power that must be respected and preserved. This is evident in the following quote:

Data 5

"Masyarakat selalu menghormati Dewi Sri agar tanaman padi tetap subur dan hasil panen melimpah." (Rumidjah & Jumeiri, 1984, p. 49, 3rd sentence)

This quote from Data 5 indicates that nature is represented as a source of life's balance whose sustainability must be maintained. The harmony of the relationship between humans and nature is believed to foster the well-being and survival of the community. This depiction reveals that in the agrarian culture of the Nusantara, nature holds a significant position not only

ecologically but also spiritually and socially. Nature is understood as an integral part of human life, so its existence must be preserved to ensure the creation of a balanced life together.

The representation of nature in the Dewi Sri legend reflects the ecological perspective of the agrarian society of the Nusantara. Nature is positioned as a source of life possessing spiritual and cultural value. This aligns with the view that literature rooted in local culture often presents nature as a symbol of balance and the sustainability of human life (Syarif, 2022).

Rice, as the central symbol in the legend of Dewi Sri, indicates that nature has a direct connection to the well-being of society. From an ecofeminist perspective, nature is not viewed as an object to be freely exploited, but rather as an integral part of life that must be respected. Ecofeminism emphasizes the importance of fostering a harmonious relationship between humans and nature as a form of resistance against ecological exploitation (Kurniasih, 2023).

The representation of sacred land in the legend of Dewi Sri also highlights the presence of ecological values within the agrarian culture of the Nusantara. Soil fertility is viewed as a blessing that must be preserved through a respectful attitude toward nature. This aligns with research indicating that Indonesian folklore contains significant ecological values, particularly the reverence for nature as the source of community life (M. Sari & Kusuma, 2022).

Furthermore, rituals honoring Dewi Sri demonstrate that traditional communities possess a strong ecological consciousness. Nature is understood as an integral part of spiritual life, thereby imposing a moral responsibility on humans to protect it. This is because the spirituality of nature in Indonesian folklore reflects a harmonious relationship between humans, the environment, and local cultural values (Fauziah et al., 2024).

Thus, the representation of nature in the legend of Dewi Sri indicates that nature is viewed as a source of life, a symbol of well-being, and a spiritual space whose sustainability must be safeguarded.

The Relationship Between Women and Nature in the Legend of Dewi Sri Based on an Ecofeminist Analysis

Based on the analysis, the relationship between women and nature in the legend of Dewi Sri is illustrated through the symbolic connection between the figure of Dewi Sri and the earth's fertility. Women and nature are represented as two interrelated elements in sustaining the livelihood of agrarian communities. In this legend, women are not merely portrayed as figures living in harmony with nature, but as an integral part of nature itself. The figure of Dewi Sri is depicted as one with nature because various food crops which are the source of human life grow from her body. This depiction indicates that women are positioned as symbols of life with a close connection to soil fertility, food security, and community well-being. This relationship demonstrates that women are not positioned as separate from nature, but rather as an essential component in maintaining ecological balance and the sustainability of community life. This is evident in the following quote:

Data 6

"Dari tubuh Dewi Sri tumbuh tanaman padi dan berbagai tumbuh-tumbuhan yang berguna bagi kehidupan manusia." (Rumidjah & Jumeiri, 1984, p. 48, sentence 2)

This quote from Data 6 demonstrates that women and nature share a close and interconnected relationship. Dewi Sri's body, which gives birth to food crops, illustrates that women are viewed as a source of life that provides well-being for society. The presence of food crops emerging from Dewi Sri's body signifies a symbolic connection between women and the fertility of nature. Women are represented as figures capable of giving birth, nurturing, and sustaining life, just as nature provides for human needs. This representation demonstrates that women and nature both play vital roles in sustaining human life, and thus both must be protected

and their existence respected. Furthermore, this depiction also reflects the perspective of an agrarian society that views women and nature as complementary elements in creating a balance of life.

The legend of Dewi Sri also illustrates that the continuity of human life is highly dependent on the preservation of nature. Therefore, the community pays homage to Dewi Sri as an effort to maintain soil fertility and the balance of life. This homage reflects the community's awareness that human well-being depends on a harmonious relationship with nature. Dewi Sri is viewed not only as a revered female figure but also as a symbol of fertility and the continuity of agrarian life. This is evident in the following quote:

Data 7

"Masyarakat memberikan penghormatan kepada Dewi Sri agar sawah tetap subur dan hasil panen melimpah." (Rumidjah & Jumeiri, 1984, p. 49, sentence 3)

This quote from Data 7 demonstrates that the relationship between women and nature is built upon values of care, protection, and the sustainability of life. The reverence for Dewi Sri is not merely directed toward a female figure but also serves as a symbol of respect for nature, which sustains human life. This depiction reveals that agrarian societies possess a strong ecological consciousness because they understand that damage to nature will impact human life. Therefore, the harmonious relationship between humans and nature must be continuously maintained to ensure collective well-being. This representation highlights a cultural perspective that positions women and nature as the center of balance in agrarian society.

Furthermore, women in the legend of Dewi Sri are not portrayed as weak, but rather as the center of life and the source of the community's well-being. Dewi Sri is revered as a figure who brings life and prosperity through nature. This depiction indicates that women hold a significant position in the social life of agrarian communities, as their presence is associated with human well-being and the continuity of life. This is evident in the following quote:

Data 8

"Sejak adanya tanaman padi dari Dewi Sri, kehidupan manusia menjadi tenteram dan berkecukupan." (Rumidjah & Jumeiri, 1984, p. 47, 6th sentence)

Data excerpt 8 indicates that women are portrayed as holding an important position in society. The presence of Dewi Sri brought about significant changes in human life, as the rice plants originating from her were able to bring peace and a sufficient livelihood to the community. The representation of women and nature in the legend of Dewi Sri demonstrates respect for women as guardians of life, as well as respect for nature as the source of well-being for the agrarian communities of the Indonesian archipelago. Furthermore, this depiction also indicates that women and nature are viewed as two interrelated and inseparable elements in maintaining the balance of human life.

The relationship between women and nature in the legend of Dewi Sri reflects a central concept of ecofeminism: the close connection between women and the natural environment. From an ecofeminist perspective, women are seen as having a special affinity with nature because both play a vital role in sustaining life, ensuring its continuity, and serving as a source of community well-being. Women and nature are viewed as two interconnected elements, such that damage to one will impact the sustainability of human life. In the legend of Dewi Sri, this relationship is evident through the portrayal of Dewi Sri as a symbol of fertility and the source of life for agrarian communities. Dewi Sri's presence represents not only women as individuals but also as part of nature capable of bringing life to humans through the growth of food crops. Ecofeminism views women and nature as interconnected entities that must be protected from

patriarchal exploitation (Wulandari et al., 2022). This perspective demonstrates that women and nature hold equally vital roles in maintaining the social and ecological balance of society.

The figure of Dewi Sri, who is one with the earth and produces food crops, symbolizes women as guardians of nature's fertility. This symbol demonstrates that women play a vital role in the ecological sustainability of society, as their presence is associated with soil fertility, successful harvests, and human well-being. In this legend, Dewi Sri's body gives birth to food crops that serve as the lifeblood of agrarian communities, thereby positioning women as figures who both bestow life and safeguard the continuity of nature. This representation indicates that women are not positioned as separate from nature but rather as an integral part of the natural environment. This aligns with research stating that Dewi Sri is viewed as an ecological spiritual symbol of agrarian societies because she represents the harmonious relationship between humans and nature (Ulifia, 2024). This depiction reveals that the agrarian communities of the Nusantara hold an ecological perspective that positions women as symbols of fertility and protectors of life.

The relationship between women and nature in this legend also reflects the value of sustainable living. Human life is depicted as heavily dependent on nature, while nature is preserved through reverence for the female symbol as the source of life. The community's reverence for Dewi Sri indicates an awareness that the balance of nature must be maintained so that human life may continue to thrive. From an ecofeminist perspective, the harmonious relationship between humans and nature is one of the ways to ensure the sustainability of the environment and the social life of the community. Ecofeminist studies in literature indicate that environmental conservation can be fostered through values of care and respect for women and nature (Zulfikar et al., 2023). This perspective is evident in the legend of Dewi Sri, which illustrates that the well-being of an agrarian society can only be achieved if humans maintain a harmonious relationship with nature and honor women as symbols of life.

Furthermore, the legend of Dewi Sri demonstrates that women hold a central role in maintaining social and ecological harmony within society. Women are not merely viewed as domestic symbols but also as protectors of life and guardians of natural balance. The figure of Dewi Sri is portrayed as a revered entity capable of bestowing prosperity and ensuring the continuity of life for the community through nature. This depiction indicates that women possess symbolic power closely tied to the existence of the natural environment. This aligns with research stating that women in contemporary literature are often portrayed as characters possessing ecological awareness and a sense of responsibility toward the environment (Siregar & F, 2025). Such representations demonstrate that women play a crucial role in fostering ecological awareness within society through the values of care, protection, and respect for nature.

Thus, the relationship between women and nature in the legend of Dewi Sri demonstrates a harmonious bond built upon the values of fertility, protection, care, and the sustainability of life. The ecofeminist perspective in this legend reveals that women and nature are two vital, mutually supportive elements in maintaining the balance of life in the agrarian communities of the Indonesian archipelago. This depiction demonstrates that women and nature are inseparable, as both serve as sources of life and well-being for the community. Furthermore, the legend of Dewi Sri also reflects the cultural perspective of agrarian societies, which regard women and nature as vital components in fostering social and ecological harmony.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the legend of Dewi Sri represents women as symbols of life, fertility, and the continuity of agrarian society, while nature is portrayed as a sacred source of life that must be respected and preserved. Through an ecofeminist perspective, the legend

reveals a harmonious and interdependent relationship between women and nature, emphasizing their shared roles as providers of life, protectors of ecological balance, and foundations of community well-being. The reverence for Dewi Sri reflects the ecological worldview of Nusantara agrarian communities, in which environmental sustainability and social harmony are achieved through respect for both women and nature. Therefore, the legend of Dewi Sri functions not only as a cultural narrative but also as a medium for transmitting ecological wisdom and cultural values that remain relevant to contemporary environmental conservation and gender awareness.

Future studies are encouraged to expand ecofeminist research on Nusantara folk literature by examining different legends, regions, or comparative cultural contexts to provide a broader understanding of the relationship between women, nature, and local ecological knowledge. In addition, the legend of Dewi Sri has strong potential to be integrated into educational and cultural preservation programs as a means of promoting environmental responsibility, gender respect, and sustainable values. Such efforts may contribute to strengthening public awareness of the importance of maintaining a balanced relationship between humans and nature while preserving Indonesia's rich cultural heritage.

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