

Serat Wedatama and Character Education

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SERAT WEDATAMA AND CHARACTER EDUCATION

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Abstract

Many people understand that a character education is only related to politeness. This understanding is certainly too narrow because character in Javanese culture has broader meaning than just being polite. The ideas regarding character education have been presented by Mangkunegara IV through his work of Serat Wedatama. Problems arise when the work is written in the form of symbolic traditional songs, namely Pangkur, Sinom, Pocung, and gambuh. This paper aims at investigating the kinds of character messages presented in the first section of Serat Wedatama which was composed in the form of pangkur traditional songs. The method employed in this research is a historical research method, whose stages include heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography. Considering the object of the study is a manuscript, content analysis and semantic approaches are utilized. The approach was chosen merely to obtain the clarity of the meaning which are implicitly expressed in the form a traditional song of pangkur. The results are traditional songs describes the atmosphere, circumstances, or will to be achieved. The first section of pangkur traditional song, in general, contains a message about the guidance to achieve the perfection of which can be attained by abandoning worldly things. Among the 14 traditional songs of Pangkur, their first section presents some basic thoughts namely Angkara, Ngelmu, Atining Tatakrama, Lumuh asor kudu unggul, puruhita, and manembah

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Introduction

The growing number of news on corruption, fraud, violence, and hate speech which are frequently broadcasted by television and go viral in social media indicate a moral decline. For a society which still holds the moral values, it certainly raises deep concerns. The older generation considers that the present situation is full of bad behaviors, they miss the situation in the past which are covered with honesty and politeness. Many behaviors which indicate this moral depravity may affect the field of education i.e. the omission of budipekerti lessons from the curriculum. Formal educational institutions are blamed since they focus on pursuing a high passing rate of the National Examination. The high passing rate on the National Exam will be able to improve the prestige of the school. Thus, lessons that are not tested on the National Exam are slightly disregarded, including lessons which contain moral messages or character developments such as history lessons. Furthermore, education is assumed to solely develop intellectual intelligence and ignores spiritual as well as social intelligence.

Facing this reality, the educational experts try to find a solution. Character building should start at an early age, formally through educational institutions and non-formally through the family and community. Through the formal efforts, the National Education Ministry's Curriculum Center in 2010 has developed a character education, in which the materials are integrated into the existing subjects. The materials for character education are formulated into 18 items which include religious, honest, tolerance, discipline, environment care, social care, curiosity, spirit of nationality, love of the country, creative,

hard work, independent, democratic, peace loving, achievement, high reading passionate, and responsibility. If the character education is successfully integrated into these subjects, learners will not only learn the theory of characters (how to know), but also learn how to behave in a good manner (how to do).

In order to enhance learners performing a good character, the teachers play a vital role. To this end, they should be a role model for performing a good character. A teacher must be "digugu lan ditiru" (being followed and imitated). Also, they must become an example for their learners and perform a good behavior both inside and outside of schools. This is for sure depending on the individual, if the teachers want to imitate the teaching of Ki Hadjar Dewantara who educated by employing cultural approaches, the character values will be instilled to the learners.

Building a nation's character is certainly not an easy job and can not be realized in a short time. What we have done at the moment will result in many years later. The the nation's character building is certainly not only the responsibility of the schools, but also the family and society. In school, students learn more theories and do a little practice. The information and models more likely come from outside of the school environment such as the media, direct observation and experience, which provide much greater effects. With regard to this, the people's participation in character building is badly needed.

In Islamic Javanese Kingdom era, literary works whose sources derive from Indian literature were still produced by a poet. One of them is KGPA Mangkunegara IV, a king who is also a poet. During his reign, he had made many changes intended to improve

the prosperity of his people such as changes in the field of constitutional, social, and economic. One of the strategies to improve the capacity of the royal apparatus and his people is to provide advices through literary works. During his life, Mangkunegara IV (1811 - 1881) has produced 42 texts. Among his works, there are two outstanding manuscripts namely Serat Wedatama and Serat Tripama.

Serat Wedatama as one of Mangkunegara IV's works is interesting to be examined since it presents teachings for all citizens, particularly for young generation. The messages conveyed through Serat Wedatama include advices for people to achieve perfection to be united with God. In order to unite with the God, human being must perform good behaviors or characters. With regard to this, Serat Wedatama provides a worthy source for instilling noble characters to the learners with respect to their levels.

Kadipaten Mangkunegaran

Kadipaten Mangkunegaran stands after a long struggle of its founder, Raden Mas Said or Sambernyawa Prince which lasted from 1740s until 1757. His struggle began when he, as a king's relatives, was treated unfairly, even not only him but also his father, Arya Mangkunegara Prince. Raden Mas Said left the palace and rebelled against Sunan Paku Buwono II and VOC for keeping the dignity of his ancestors due to a slander from his rival Patih Danureja, who accused Prince Arya Mangkunegara seducing the king's wife, then he was dumped to Batavia, Sri Lanka, and finally to Tanjung Harapan. Sunan Paku Buwana II actually did not trust on the slander. As Arya Mangkunegara Prince has a great influence on the princes, Sunan Paku

Buwana II was worried that he will be rebelled.

Raden Mas Said jointly struggled with the prince of Mangkubumi (later became Sultan Hamengku Buwana I) who was also dissapointed due to Sunan Paku Buwana II policy. The joint struggle of Raden Mas Said and Pangeran Mangkubumi got a sympathy from the palace relatives and the people. The greater power of rebellion was also caused by the policy of Sunan Paku Buwana II which was influenced by the VOC, therefore it burdened local officials. The officials were obliged to deposit some of their income to pay the king's debts to the VOC. This obligation was burdensome. Due to this obligation, people did not want to acknowledge the power of the king, therefore many royal officials rejected his policy and cut the ties with the king.

Mangkunegara IV is one of the great figures in Indonesian history. He is one of the Kings living in the palace since childhood. Mangkunegara IV was born on March 3, 1811 having the name of RM. Sudiro. In his childhood, he was educated with high discipline, especially when he was cared by his grandfather, Mangkunegara II, who instructed to study religion, reading and writing Javanese scripts. Before teenagers, he grew with Mangkunegara III to be further educated. RM Sudiro did not take a formal education but a home schooling. Some of his teachers were from Dutch, namely Dr. Gericke and CF.Winter. His appearance and intelligence have attracked Mangkunegara III to adopt him as a son. Moreover, as Mangkunegara III had no son, RM Sudiro was appointed as a Prince Duke, having a title of Aryo Gondokusumo Prince, who later succeeded him to be a Mangkunegaran's ruler. After KGPAA Mangkunegara III died, he was

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appointed as KGPAА Prangwadana IV in 1853, and inaugurated as KGPAА Mangkunegara IV in 1857.

Serat Wedatama

After the Java War ended, the colonial Government made a new policy which limited the movement of indigenous rulers and their political relatives. This Strict supervision encouraged the kings to be active in the field of culture, until the 19th century, many literary works were produced, such as dance and karawitan. In Surakarta, masterpiece was produced in that era, even they are still popular today such as Serat Wulangreh which was produced by Sunan Pakubuwana IV, Serat Wedatama and Serat Tripama that were made by KGPAА Mangkunegara IV and etc.

Like other Javanese literary works in general, Serat Wedatama are symbolic in nature which means that the messages conveyed are always hidden behind the symbols. Therefore, in order to understand the intended messages, a reader of Javanese literature must understand Javanese culture. Moreover, if the literary works are presented in the form of traditional songs (tembang), the rules of songs should be understood as well. Each stanza in the song is arranged in a number of lines called guru gatra and each line must be subject to the rules of guru wilangan and guru lagu. Guru wilangan is the number of syllables in each line, while guru lagu is the vowel sound of the syllable at the end of each line. This rule often forces the artists to use dictions to meet the rules of writing the song, and keep message delivered.

Serat Wedatama is the work of Mangkunegara IV which is very popular among the people of Java. It is not only popular in Pura Mangkunegaran and

Surakarta in general, but also in other areas such as Yogyakarta. Moreover, it consists of four parts namely 14 traditional songs of pangkur, 18 traditional songs of Sinom, 15 traditional songs of Pocung, and 25 traditional songs of Gambuh. But later, there was an addition in which Gambuh traditional song was added with 10 stanzas, so its total was 35 stanzas. Also, one traditional song was added namely Kinanthi traditional song, which consisted of 18 stanzas. Thus the new version of Serat Wedatama contains 100 traditional songs. However, regardless of the original or new version of serat wedhatama, this initial study focuses on investigating first part of the work or Pangkur traditional songs. This is carried out by considering that the content of Serat Wedatama can be explained in various ways, namely explaining the each stanza or by choosing the expression and the issues presented which are considered important, then they are explained simultaneously in order to obtain a thorough understanding.

In general, Serat Wedatama provides advices or suggestions to its readers since there many earthly temptations when human pursue the perfect life. The temptations may lead to the failure of reaching the perfection. This earthly nature should be controlled so that the spiritual and the physical balance can be achieved. Keeping this balance is the duty of human being in order to realize peace and prosperity. With regard to keeping this balance, Serat wedhatama was created to advice humans in order to perform good actions, thus perfection of life can be attained. Serat Wedatama is a literary work which is originally written in the form of Javanese poetry, which can be divided entirely into four groups of traditional songs: Pangkur, Sinom, Pocung, and Gambuh. Then, in its new version,

there is an additional song namely Kinanthi. However, this addition does not remain a problem as this study discusses the first section of Serat Wedatama which contains 14 traditional songs. This work is categorized as a piwulang or advice of live, since it contains various life guidance which are very broad and deep. To understand the content of Serat Wedatama written in the form of macapat song, readers should firstly understand Javanese culture, especially concerning the rules in writing pangkur traditional song, considering that this research focuses on discussing the first part of Serat Wedatama written in the form of Pangkur traditional song. Each line of the Pangkur traditional song consists of 7 rows following the rules of guru wilangan and guru lagu as described below.

The arrangement of Pangkur Traditional Song

Lines	Guru Wilangan (the number of syllables in each line)	Guru Lagu (the vowel sound of the syllable at the end of each line)
1	8	A
2	11	I
3	8	U
4	7	A
5	12	U
6	8	A
7	8	I

Due the above rules, a traditional song writer often has to disregard grammatical aspects solely to comply with the rules. For example nagari Astina (Astina's state) is reversed into Astina nagari (state Astina). Moreover, two words are often combined into

a single word, for example ana ing is combine into neng, or a word consisting of 3 syllables is combined into two syllables, e.g. Nagari into Nagri. The above examples show that writers prefer the beauty to grammar. More importantly, writers do not change the meaning and the message of the song that he wrote.

Mangkunegara IV tried to abandon the worldly-desire. To make easier discussing the work of KGPA, this research focuses on the first section of the Serat Wedatama or macapat Pangkur. Pangkur derives from the word mungkur, pamungkur, or nyingkur which literally means being at the front of the back. This implies that back is a worldly life. In short, Pangkur may guide someone to leave something worldly.

As stated earlier that each traditional song describes the atmosphere, circumstances, or will to be achieved. Thus, the first section of pangkur traditional song, in general, contains a message about the guidance to achieve the perfection of which can be attained by abandoning worldly things. Among the 14 traditional songs of Pangkur, their first section presents some basic thoughts namely Angkara, Ngelmu, Atining Tatakrama, Lumuh asor kudu unggul, puruhita, manembah, ngelmu pangukut, liyep-layap-luyut, ngasepi, supena and rasajati. Those thoughts are divided into two levels namely physical and spiritual. In this case, character education deals with physical levels, namely in the expression of angkara, ngelmu, atining tatakrama, lumuh asor kudu unggul, puruhita and manembah.

1. Angkara is a desire which also means an ambition. Every person has a desire, but one person and the other have differences in controlling their desire. The ability to

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control the desire is what determines how good of a person's character is.

2. *Ngelmu* means knowledge. In *Serat Wedatama*, good knowledge is the knowledge which can reassure the people who seek it. *Wedatama* divides knowledge into two namely, physical and spiritual knowledge. The physical knowledge is also called the basic knowledge while the spiritual knowledge is the noble knowledge. Noble knowledge is core knowledge that exists in the world. With regard to this, it is mentioned that the noble knowledge is knowledge that must be possessed by high-ranking people (all kings of Java are equipped with noble knowledge in order to help his people from various difficulties).
3. *Atining tatakrama* means the essence of manners, therefore the meaning of manner is different from decency. The decency may be applied differently from one to another, so there is a term "*desa mawa cara*" which means each village has their own manners. Meanwhile, decency deals with being fair, this attach to anyone and there is no different one and the other.
4. *Lumuh kasar kudu unggul* which means humans who always want to be praised. On the other hand, praise is an obstacle for having progress, because a person who is praised a lot often forgets himself and feels more than the other. The impact giving excessive praises is the feeling of arrogant and being able to do more than the others. In addition, it also causes an attitude of putting someone down, but certainly no one is willing to be underestimated. That is why this becomes an obstacle in achieving the goal, because there must be temptations in the course of life, like a tall tree, the

higher of the tree, the greater of the wind which blows it.

5. *Puruhita* means studying. In *Serat Wedatama*, studying is divided into two levels, namely physical and spiritual. The spiritual studying must be based on physical studying. In its process, when life experience becomes knowledge, then it is time to begin performing a spiritual studying.
6. *Manambah* means worshipping. In *Serat Wedatama*, worshipping is classified into the two levels namely physical and spiritual. Worshipping to him/herself has a broad meaning namely respect and obedience. This means that humans must respect and obey their parents, siblings, kings and teachers. Meanwhile, the spiritual worship deals with worshipping the God. This level of worshipping will be accepted if someone has performed a physical worshipping.

Conclusions

KGPAA Mangkunegara IV was born on March 3, 1811 whose name is RM. Sudiro. In his childhood, he was educated with high discipline by his grandfather KGPAA Mangkunegara II to study religion, read and write Javanese scripts. When approaching the teenagers under the parenting of KGPAA Mangkunegara III, he learned with invited teachers having Dutch nationals namely Dr.Gericke and CF.Winter. The personality and intelligence of RM Sudiro had attracted KGPAA Mangkunegara III, therefore he was appointed as his adopted son. After KGPAA Mangkunegara III died, he was appointed as KGPAA Prangwadana IV in 1853, and was inaugurated as KGPAA Mangkunegara IV in 1857. His passion on discussions and art works had led him to be a king of poet.

The messages presented in Serat Wedatama are moral messages for character education, so it is worth to be revitalized in order to be imitated by everyone. Mangkunegara IV, in his work, mentions the four levels of human devotion of worship which include physical, soul and feeling worship. Those are addressed to the One God. Worshipping God is not only in the form of prayer and all kinds of rituals, but also in the form of everyday behavior. Thus the worship will come to the God.

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