

# Pupuh Pangkur in Serat Wulangreh towards Javanese Youth Building Character: Lesson Learned from School-aged Children in Surakarta

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**ABSTRACT**---This study aimed at exploring the Javanese ethics and traditional teachings through understanding the Javanese texts. This was studied to find basic and comprehensive information about positive values establishing Javanese noble character manifested from and its implementation to the modern Javanese society and its relation to the concept of preserving arts and culture in accordance with Javanese philosophy. The study was designed with a qualitative paradigm conducted through explorative and survey methods. The data were collected through detailed interviews, observation, and documents/records analysis, as well as a literature review. The data were then analyzed using a contextual pragmatic analysis model. The study suggests that philosophical values implementation of pupuh pangkur to school-aged children is highly necessary, and the result is used as a recommendation for the development of school curriculum.

**Keywords**---art, character building, culture preservation, implication, pupuh pangkur, Serat Wulangreh.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Education institutions have had an important role to play since the entry of the Asian Economic Community (AEC) in 2015, as Indonesian education institutions are currently experiencing a period of change that involves a holistic learning framework for their students (Chulakaratan, 2016). In *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), disruption is defined as being uprooted from its roots, Because that very rapid changes are taking place in the context of human life, which fundamentally undermines old order patterns to create a new order in the use of digital technology, including in academic arrangements, in the form of demands on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of students.

Human behavior is formed by the process of socialization and childhood learning in a socio-cultural environment so that people are influenced by culture and life through the process of inheritance/transmission and learning activities (Barclay, 1971). With regard to the development of the role of students in the Industrial Era 4.0 in Indonesian schools and their executive officers, it can be understood that: (1) the character of school students is an integral part of national education; (2) guidance as a profession; and (3) The executive officer, as a psychologist, is a counseling teacher. As a result of all this, (1) programs that offer priority to the character of education and its implementation become an integral part of the national program; (2) Teachers are certainly required to develop

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their profession in a sustainable way (Radjah, 2016). Character education, which is basically value to education. Value education can be derived from local wisdom, the goal of which is to harmonize people in their society (Setyaputri, 2017). One of the prominent sources of local value education as manifested in Javanese poetical song *pupuh pangkur* in Serat Wulangreh.

In the midst of the industrial revolution 4.0 the ideal conditions of life habits and human interactions allow the society to have three main literacies among others: data literacy, technology literacy, and human literacy. Simply stated that this third type of literacy relates to leadership skills, the ability to work in teams, the ability to understand other people's cultures to establish relationships with people across cultures. Interpersonal skills are needed for communication in order to make communication work well. This is in line with one of the challenges of the Industrial Revolution 4.0. Human beings are expected to have interpersonal communication skills. Nonetheless, this is not something that many people care about. People often assume interpersonal communication skills are not necessary and need not be learned (Penprase, 2018). By this belief, people are experiencing a communication problem, such as a misunderstood perception of communication. Miscommunication to this confusion triggers conflicts, disagreements, discussions, challenges, etc.

Both civilization and education are historical phenomena that go hand in hand with the present. Education becomes central to civilization, and the result of education itself is civilization. In order to achieve character education, an educational process is needed that takes place within the framework of a planned program. Similarly, the character is the key to success for it is the main capital and is important to the advancement of individuals and nations. In the industrial era 4.0, the world community in general and the Indonesian people, in particular, are increasingly spoiled by the sophisticated technology (Indonesia Economic Update, 2019). The role and perspective of human beings in living life as social beings continue to change. In addition to this phenomenon, moral degradation is increasingly widespread. That way people are increasingly degenerating into the momentary truth.

The social and cultural behaviors of Javanese people constantly refer to the traditional Javanese customs that are rooted in the values of the palace (*keraton*). The palace is believed to be the center of the cosmos, which significantly influences the peaceful and harmonious life. The concept is manifested in the ideas, behaviors, as well as various forms that can be found in our environment. *Pupuh pangkur* manuscript was originally introduced in the palace. The manuscript is a creation of the palace's poets such as Yosodipuro and RNg. Ronggowarsito, as well as kings such as Paku Buwana IV (from Kasunanan Palace) and Mangkunagara IV (from Mangkunegaran Palace). The script of the *pupuh pangkur* is initially created as speech utterances delivered to the children/ancestry (*sentana dalem*) and courtiers (someone from outside *keraton* or the Javanese Palace those who work in the Palace). Next, the *pupuh* is shared with the public (*kawula dalem*). Even though the script of *pupuh pangkur* is melodiously and tunefully chanted, it is important that the listeners understand the content/meaning of the *pupuh*. However, not many people know what messages are delivered through *pupuh pangkur*, and how it affects their life in general (Peniro & Cyntas, 2019; Li & Huan, 2019; Smith *et al.*, 2018).

Bearing in mind the *pupuh pangkur* itself is written in Javanese language, both meaning and the messages reflected in it have become a part of the Javanese people's life guidance. There are a number of relevant studies which have attempted to explore *pupuh pangkur* and Serat Wulangreh (Wreksosoehardjo, 2009; Simuh, 1988; Ardani, 1995; Siswokartono 2003; Muslich, 2005; and Anjar Any, 2001), one of which discusses storybook with picture based on *pupuh pangkur* of Serat Wulangreh for Javanese language learning (Ardiyana, 2020). Their

studies mostly examined cosmological analysis on Javanese poetical songs and the translation of it into Indonesian (Sanjaya, 2017), and some only focused on stylistic exploration of the poetical songs (Budilaksono, 2018). In addition, the analysis was quite general, not associated with wider cultural contexts such as the Javanese moral in applied cases (Santosa, 2016). More specifically it is necessary to deeply study the impacts of the noble teachings reflected from *pupuh pangkur* in *Serat Wulangreh* from the Javanese philosophy of moral value and local ethic perspectives to foster students' noble local character in the city of Surakarta in the era of industrial revolution 4.0.

Considering the importance of the local culture's roles in shaping the personality and character of a nation, this paper seeks to explore current students' characters toward *pupuh pangkur* of *Serat Wulangreh* as guidance in running their lives amidst the society of industrial revolution 4.0. era. Therefore, several questions need to be answered; (1) why is *pupuh pangkur* (in *Serat Wulangreh*) not widely recognized by current Javanese generation? (2) what are the philosophical values of *pupuh pangkur* (in *Serat Wulangreh*), and what are their significance on Javanese social and cultural concept? (3) What does the community think about the presence of *pupuh pangkur* (in *Serat Wulangreh*)? (4) What efforts are made to preserve Javanese culture, particularly *pupuh pangkur* (in *Serat Wulangreh*), and what should be done to implement the values of character building among the current generation?

## II. METHOD

This study is designed with a qualitative approach and is focused on cultural aspects that manifest philosophical-pedagogical values, understood as a representation of the social and cultural system of the society. Each of the values does not stand separately, but interdependent to support each other. The setting of this study was taken in Surakarta. The location is selected based on the following reasons: (1) Surakarta is the center of Javanese culture and values, (2) Activities to preserve Javanese culture are still commonly done, for example singing *macapat*, (3) *Pupuh pangkur* scripts are still found in the library of Mangkunegaran and Kasunanan Javanese Palace.

To understand *pupuh pangkur* (particularly in *Serat Wulangreh*) as a product of Javanese culture, the research is centered on one area of Javanese culture as a unit analyzed in a case study. However, the source of information used in the research is not limited to sources within the area being analyzed. The researchers also study information from various sources outside of the research area as a literature review. To explore information and collect data, the research focused on two main sources, documents/archives/manuscripts and informants (Sutopo, 2006). The main source being analyzed is documents and archives or manuscripts of *pupuh pangkur* (particularly in *Serat Wulangreh*). The documents include archives of books containing the text of *pupuh pangkur* (particularly in *Serat Wulangreh*) (Miles & Huberman, 1984; 1992).

Informants are individuals who understand and have enough knowledge about the subject matter. To pick informants, the researchers use the snowball technique. The snowball technique is used to search for reliable individuals as a source of data that can provide accurate information. The individuals are then chosen purposively (Goetz and Le Comte, 1984). To collect data, the researchers try to understand the meaning and value within the Kasunanan Palace's version of *pupuh pangkur*. To obtain information from informants, the researchers conduct thorough interviews. The interviews are conducted in unspecified frequency. The interview is considered enough when the research data obtained through an interview is adequate, solid, and reliable after getting through a

validation process. The interview is conducted with individuals who have profound comprehension about *pupuh pangkur*, for example palace noblemen (*sentana dalem*/ancestry), courtiers, librarians, humanists, Javanese *wiraswara* (traditional singers), Javanese traditional art researchers, Javanese literature educators and students, and Javanese art and culture observers. To avoid inaccuracies in recording the information, the researchers use voice recorder in addition to taking notes (Spradley, 1997; Sunaryo, 2009; Susanto, 2010).

### III. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Discussion on the philosophical values of the *pupuh pangkur* (in *Serat Wulangreh*) and its association with the Javanese social-cultural concept is described in the following explanation. The description refers to two sources of manuscript, the one posted by Hadi Susanto on September 11, 2010 and the other by Muslih (2006).

Introducing *pupuh pangkur* (in *Serat Wulangreh* written by Paku Buwana IV) to the Young Generation and their Responses

According to Muslih (2006) in addition to being a king and a poet, Paku Buwana IV has a strong religious life as an influence from the palace's headmen and poets, such as Yasadipura I, Yasadipura II, and Raden Ngabehi Ranggawarsita (Yasadipura III), and also Mangkunagara IV in Mangkunagaran, who mostly graduated from an Islamic boarding school. During that period, Paku Buwana IV wrote a lot of advice related to religious life, which is compiled as *Serat Wulangreh*. The term *Wulangreh* in the dictionary of Javanese language is originated from the word *wulang*, meaning to teach, to advise; and *reh*, which means a matter or a thing. Thus, the term refers to the philosophy or teaching related to human behavior in everyday life. Through *Serat Wulangreh*, Pakubuwana IV taught that a person should share knowledge based on law, proposition, *Hadith* (collection of traditions containing sayings of the prophet Muhammad), *ijma* (consensus or agreement of the Muslim community on religious issues), and *qiyas* (comparing and contrasting the teachings of the Quran and the Hadith) (Purwadi *et al.*, 2005). In addition, it also explained that human should learn to control their passions and desires, in order to understand the chronicles of life and to listen more carefully to the instructions of the Lord. Human is encouraged to reduce and control themselves against worldly pleasures (Namawi, 1999; Siswokartono, 2003).

*Serat Wulangreh* is very popular among Javanese society. According to Poerbatjaraka (Purwadi *et al.*, 2005; Harsono, 2005), *Serat Wulangreh* plays a significant role in the daily life of Javanese people. However, the message of *Serat Wulangreh* is not popular among the younger generation. Based on the finding of research conducted in Javanese communities, Young people are not familiar with *Pupuh pangkur* (in both *Serat Wedhatama* and *Serat Wulangreh*). The reason *pupuh pangkur* is not popular among young people is that the young generation generally prefers to listen to modern love songs performed by popular bands. Besides, Javanese *macapat* songs are not widely introduced to younger generation, which leads to the decline of interest in *macapat pupuh*. Even though the *pupuh*s are taught at schools, many youngsters consider *macapat pupuh*s old-fashioned. Another possible reason is that the language used in *macapat pupuh*s is not easy to understand, because the *pupuh* use a lot of metaphors and figurative language.

Another reason is that *pupuh pangkur* is not included in the school curriculum, teaching, and learning. In addition, the public, in general, is not well exposed to the *pupuh*. The situation is worsened by the age of technological development that leads to the infiltration of popular culture from other parts of the world. The popular

culture is much preferred because most people consider it more modern and up-to-date than Javanese culture. Several factors that make *pupuh pangkur* not popular among the society include: (a) *Social factor*: A communication gap between parents and children hinders the transfer of moral values to the next generation; (b) *Cultural factor*: The currently developing culture is a technology-based culture, which takes less account of spoken conversation. Younger people tend to enjoy the freedom of expression without any restricting rules; (c) *Economic factor*: The development of material-oriented liberalization makes the younger generation only willing to receive information that can change their lives by increasing their economic condition; (d) *Religious factor*: The current generation thinks that *pupuh pangkur* only contains religious advice, thus they are not interested in the *pupuh* since they do not have very strong religious beliefs due to the lack of role model from the older generation.

### ***The Philosophical Value of pupuh pangkur (in Serat Wulangreh) in Relations to the of Javanese Social and Cultural Concept***

The advice from the palace's poets is always delivered in form of *pupuh*. Through a *pupuh*, people who listen to the advice do not feel forced to comply with it, instead they will pay attention to the melody happily. Javanese people have a very strong tradition to uphold; for example, they must perform good manners everywhere, all the time. It has become a common rule that a young person must respect the elders. As part of his advice, Pakubuwana IV reminded people that there are two opposite qualities in life: the good and the bad. Good characters must be inculcated in every person. If a person has good characters, good things come in exchange. In addition, by practicing good deeds, a person is believed to receive rewards from God. On the other hand, performing a wrong deed will have negative impacts on a person. Therefore, Pakubuwana IV kept giving advice to and reminding people so they will be able to distinguish good deeds and bad deeds. When people are able to understand the concept of good and bad, they will never get involved in negative actions. An example of good deeds that can be performed by a person is conforming to the teachings of religion, for example by praying, worshipping God (*shalat*), *dhikir* (rhythmically, repeatedly reciting the name of God or short phrases or prayers), establishing good relationship with others, etc. Examples of bad deeds include the acts of harming others, stealing, gambling, cheating, killing, and disturbing the peace of others.

Based on the explanation above, it is important that a person consider the advantages and disadvantages of an action before performing the action. If one does a good deed, others will respect. In contrast, when one does a bad deed, others will keep away. It is also reminded that in any circumstances, people must be conscious and have a clear mind. There are risks for every action, therefore, before performing an action, people should think carefully. If people always reflect before doing an action, they will not experience any loss. If a person performs an action without prior consideration or thought, the result will not be ideal. An action without concept will cause others to misunderstand the meaning behind the action. If such actions are performed in front of many people, people will consider the actions inappropriate. Moreover, when socializing with people, these actions should be avoided because they do not reflect the characters of people in general. Spontaneous actions will most likely not bring good result and advantages for the doer as well as other people. Therefore, people who do such actions are advised to do some introspection. They must understand that the actions they performed are inappropriate and useless, and thus they should be reminded to plan their future actions more carefully.

Human life in the world consists of two different fates, for example intelligent and unintelligent, high class and low class, day and night, rich and poor, good and bad. There are consequences for every difference. Intelligent people overcome problems easily, while the unintelligent ones find it difficult to overcome the problems they are faced with, and are more likely to be deceived by other people. High-class societies are highly respected by others, in contrast to low-class society who is being unnoticed. Rich people would easily dominate the poor, or have much more experience so they have bigger chance to do a lot of charity because of their wealth. Reality shows that every individual is born life the world with sins and mistakes. Therefore, whoever has mistaken to others should apologize immediately. In a different way, a person who has disobeyed God must come to Him in an attitude of repentance and ask for forgiveness.

The explanation above is meaningless in the presence of God, because the highest honor before Him is a person who is faithful and devoted. Human's faith and devotion to God is shown when an individual is concerned about non-secular matters instead of only paying attention to worldly affair. Therefore, good people are judged from what they do in their everyday life. For example, when walking, their eyes are fixed forward on the path they are taking, when sitting, both feet are flat on the floor instead of having their legs crossed, when talking to others, their tone is always humble, and they always look straight to the eyes of the people they are talking. In addition, when talking, good people provide an opportunity to the listener to give feedback, and when other people are talking, they pay attention and do not interrupt.

It should be emphasized further that young people must be well mannered when communicating with other people. If they need to ask a question to someone, for example asking for direction, they need to get closer and approach the listener. If they are riding or driving, they should get off the vehicle before talking. Before asking for direction, first they should greet the listener and later thank the listener for taking the time to give them direction. In addition, it is important to avoid the following behaviors: (1) Bad behaviors that are spoken, for example talking about useless matters, mocking others, call others bad names, having prejudice, criticizing and finding fault with others, lying, doing useless things, viciously accusing other people, being hypocritical, and showing off/being arrogant. (2) Bad actions, for example miserliness, cowardliness, hatred, lavishness, unjustness, mischief, arrogance, carnality, and treason.

The rules above apply to all individuals regardless of their gender, age, and educational and religious background; because in a community, everyone is equal. A religious leader who supposedly has more religious knowledge than common people should become a role model in a society. An adult male, as a husband, should protect his family and become a leader for his wife and children. Equally, a wife has responsibilities to the husband and duties to take care of family matters, managing the household budgets, and taking care of the house and the children. Humans have the nature of becoming a leader. In social life, there are government officials who are leaders for their people, clerics who are leaders for their religious community, fathers who are leaders for their families, mothers who are leaders for their children, and children who are leaders for themselves. Leaders must be responsible to themselves as well as others and must be able to protect the people they lead. On the Judgment Day, all leaders must be hold responsible for all their actions in the presence God.

One of the responsibilities of a leader is being a perfect individual in the world. According to Imam Al-Ghazali, a perfect person is someone who recognizes his/her own faults and weaknesses (Khalit Abdul Mu'thi, 2005). To be able to understand one's own weaknesses, one should do the following: (1) Ask for suggestions and criticisms

from others. (2) Get away from the crowds for a while in order to concentrate for a self-reflection. (3) Pay attention to people's behavior, imitating the good and avoiding the bad. (4) Find supports from trustworthy people who have a lot of knowledge, can give advice, and have love for God. The final phase is to pray, because people who recognize their faults and weaknesses deserve the love of God. In the past, people's behavior and manners can be shown from the way they speak. In other words, the way a person acts illustrates his personality. As a specific example, the speech of Javanese kings in ancient time was generally based on the law of the states and the palace. Therefore, the words of the king (*sabda pandhita ratu*) must be obeyed by the people for the sake of justice and prosperity. An excerpt from a speech delivered by the king says, "*ingkang panjang punjung pasir wukir gemah ripah loh jinawi tata tenerem karta raharja*," which means "a state that has vast ocean and mountains, bustling ports and dynamic trade, and cheap food and clothing will grow prosperous, well-ordered, peaceful, serene, and free from evil behavior" (Purwadi *et al.*, 2005).

Another excerpt that illustrates a person's personality is "*sabda brahmana raja sepisan dadi tan kena wola-wali*," which means, "the words of the king is definite and must be consistent." The phrase suggests that theologians and leaders should make statements only after careful consideration, because their commands and instruction must be consistent and esteemed by the people (Purwadi *et al.*, 2005). This applies not only to kings or religious leaders, but also to common people. Everyone should always think before speaking to avoid hurting other people's feeling. Every statement made must be true and accountable. As an example, it is important to have positive thoughts toward others and avoid any form of prejudice.

It has been prophesied that there will be moral degeneration in the world. One of the signs is that recently, negative behaviors such as jealousy, greed, dishonesty, laziness, envy, judgmental, arrogant, deceitfulness, ignorance, skepticism, and scandalous behavior are encountered more frequently than positive behaviors. It is very common to see rivalry among political opponents as well as unhealthy competitions to compete for seats in the parliament. Negative competition is characterized with the desire to only focus on winning, be the best, and beat the opponents. This might be one of the causes of the increasing corruption in Indonesia, which is still very difficult to combat.

Several causes of moral degeneration are moral decadence, declining religious devotion, widespread accusations against religions, excessive fanaticism, and overvaluing or undervaluing religious teachings (Mahmud, 2004). Moral decadence refers to a state in which a person completely disregards the importance of religion in everyday life. This condition is believed to be an influence from the western world. In the point of view of western culture, religious or spiritual faith is not relevant to life. The western culture is open to adultery, homosexuality, alcoholism, and the like. When religious devotion begins to decline, people's faith and willingness to sacrifice for their religion will fade. Various accusations against religion become widespread everywhere. These accusations intend to eliminate people's belief in God and religions. Excessive fanaticism to certain objects such as public figures, religious leaders, particular groups or organizations related to politics, economics, culture, and sports; political parties, ethnicity, race, language, customs, and culture also leads to moral degeneration. The attitude of overvaluing or undervaluing religious teachings indicates the shallowness of people's mind and their understanding of religion. When moral values are underestimated, people's responsibility to God and others will begin to decrease, people will start making a lot of mistakes and bad decisions, and they will be controlled by lust. These characterize human's moral decline.

In order to prevent one from acquiring negative characteristics, several traits have to be learned, including: (a) Being consistent, meaning that a person must be obedient and determined in practicing religious orders according to the guidelines/rules of God. (b) Developing religious loyalty by obeying all religious commands and avoiding all prohibitions. (c) Sincerely devoting all the ability to obtain the blessings of God and facing all problems seriously instead of underestimating the problems. (d) Being tolerant and lending a hand to other people in need. (e) Developing moderate attitude by being able to equate physical with spiritual interests, and worldly with spiritual affairs.

The creator of Pangkur manuscript wanted to remind the society to be humble, not arrogant. People who exaggeratedly reveal their own strengths or show off their good deeds are considered arrogant; and this behavior is forbidden. Arrogant people also like to point out other's faults and weaknesses in front of public. People with these characteristics are despicable and should be avoided. People who have bad personality typically perform actions such as depriving other's rights, thievery, cheating, or corruption. The main purpose of their life is to collect money and build wealth. These people are controlled by worldly desires to pursue personal pleasure such as wasting money, getting drunk, getting involved into affairs with women, and so on.

Negative behaviors will certainly affect one's life in the world as well as in the afterlife. Javanese people who are mostly Muslims believe that in the afterlife everyone would be rewarded or punished according to their intentions and deeds throughout their lifetime. If the evil deeds outweigh the good deeds, a person will be condemned to the eternal flame. Therefore, such negative behaviors should be avoided; because even though they bring pleasure, there will be punishment in the hereafter.

### ***Today's Javanese Youth and their Responses to pupuh pangkur (in Serat Wulangreh)***

Imam Sutarjo (personal interview on August 15, 2013) put forward that there are two versions of the definition of "Serat Wulangreh". The first version claims that the name comes from the word "reh" (*ngereh*), which means command or instruction. The second version believes that the word "reh" means everything related to human life. *Serat Wulangreh* contains *macapat pupuhs* including *Dhandanggula*, *Kinanthi*, *Gambuh*, *Pangkur*, *Maskumambang*, *Megatruh*, *Durma*, *Pocung*, *Mijil*, *Asmaradana*, *Sinom*, and two additional *pupuhs*, *Wirangrong* and *Girisa*. Of all the *pupuhs* in *Serat Wulangreh*, *Pupuh pangkur* in particular contains teaching about *lelabuhan* or services to the nation or the community. For example, the *pupuh* mentions that positive activities related to local customs such as communal work (*gotong royong*) must be encouraged, conducted, preserved, and developed. In addition, the *pupuh* also states that an individual should be able to distinguish between positive and negative behaviors and should not harm others. A person is believed to be able to distinguish the good and the bad when the person devotedly practices religious orders.

### ***The Effort to Preserve Javanese Cultural Product, particularly pupuh pangkur (in Serat Wulangreh) and Enhance Character Building and Education***

In Indonesia, mass media frequently promotes negative behavior, which causes viewers to be exposed to negative influences. There is a lot of news about corruption, murder, burglary, robbery, fraud, rape, and other types of crime found on the media. Practicing the values taught through *pupuh pangkur* in *Serat Wulangreh* is an effort to prevent the negative influences of the media on the Javanese society. It is important that the society is able to



not only enjoy the beauty of the *pupuh*, but also implement the good values in their daily life. The implementation of the values can be done for example by performing good manners and etiquette anywhere and anytime.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The Javanese poetical song *pupuh pangkur*, particularly in *Serat Wulangreh*, is a means of communication used by Pakubuwana IV to deliver messages to his relatives in the Palace as well as to the public in general. However, the meaning and messages reflected from the *pupuh* is not easily understood since it is written in Javanese language. Some people believe that the *pupuh* contains a deep meaning about the moment when a person enters the final stage of the dying process, while many people are scared of death. For this reason, not a lot of people are interested in learning the *pupuh*. Considering the issue, it is important that the young generation start to learn and understand the meaning of the *pupuh*, primarily to be ready for the end of their life, and at the same time to preserve Javanese culture and tradition.

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