

# Self-Introspection in the Search of Identity in *Serat Jayengbaya* by Ranggawarsita

Widi Kusumawardhani

Universitas Indonesia, Kampus Depok, 16424. Indonesia

Phone: +6285717731754

Email: widikusumawardhani02@gmail.com

**Abstract:** *Serat Jayengbaya* constituted the first work written by R. Ng. Ranggawarsita around the year 1830. *Serat Jayengbaya* is a narrative text written in *macapat Asmaradana* poetic meters. It tells the story of Jayengbaya, who was daydreaming of taking on 47 different choices in life. This research tries to study the narrative structure of the text in order to determine the textual theme of *Serat Jayengbaya*, which is then supplemented by the concept of introspection taught by Ki Ageng Suryomentaram. This research applies the structural theory written by Burhan Nurgiyantoro in his book *Teori Pengkajian Fiksi* (2015), with analytical descriptive method. Through the analysis of narrative structure, it was found that the theme of *Serat Jayengbaya* is a journey to discover one's self-identity. The theme was conveyed through narrative elements that build a cohered narrative text system.

**Keywords:** *Serat Jayengbaya*, Ranggawarsita, *macapat*, self-identity, introspection.

## 1. Introduction

*Serat Jayengbaya* (hereinafter referred to as SJ) is the first literary work written by Raden Ngabehi Ranggawarsita, then a 20-year old orderly of Carik Kadipaten Anom, around the year 1830. He was then known as Kyai Sarataka, as was mentioned in *sandiasma* of the first stanza of *Serat Jayengbaya*. The term *Jayengbaya* itself derives from the combination of the words *jaya* + *ing* + *baya*, which means 'glorious against menaces'. Ranggawarsita was a poet laureate within Kasunanan Surakarta since the reign of Pakubuwana VII until the reign of Pakubuwana IX. He was a descendant of Yasadipura I and a grandson of Yasadipura II, who were also poet laureates themselves.

Ranggawarsita is considered as one of the last poet laureates since after his era there was practically no more poet possessing the eight essential skills of a Javanese poet, namely *paramengsastrameans* 'experts in literature', *paramengkawimeans* 'excellent literary work composers', *awicaritameans* 'good storytellers', *mardawa-lagumeans* 'music and musical instruments experts', *mardawa basameans* 'great language users', *mandragunameans* 'being resourceful and knowledgeable', *nawungkridameans* 'sympathizing with other people's conditions', and *sambeganameans* 'beings virtuous' (S. Padmosoekotjo, 1958 : 12). Ranggawarsita's distinctive signature in the Javanese literary world can be seen from his excellent use of *purwakanthi* 'a literary ornament in the form of rhymes based on the syllable within a sentence' and the various use of *sandiasma* 'covert insertion of the author's name within a stanza' and *candrasangkala* patterns 'the year number translated into a sentence' (Kamajaya, 2000: 19-20). In fact, he can be called as the pioneer of the *gancaran* form of prose in his era. Ranggawarsita made approximately 56 literary works, some of which are reviews of works from other poets. His most notable works among others are *Pustakaraja Purwa*, *Kalatidha*, *Wirid Hidayatjati*, *Jaka Lodhang*, *Sabdatama*, and *Sabdajati*.

*Serat Jayengbaya* was made by Kyai Sarataka in the form of narrative text in *macapat* framework. *Macapat* is a traditional form of poetry and constitutes one of Javanese classical literatures. Classical Javanese literatures are those not yet influenced by the European style of literary writing (Robson, 1978:



9). This literature style also still applies the then established formal convention. The development of literary works during the classical Javanese period encompasses the recomposition of the Ancient Javanese literary works to follow the established convention of the times. The writings of *macapat* composition were expected to increase the number of readers and, thus, might further facilitate the delivery of the teachings and virtues conveyed in the literature texts. Karsono (2001: 11) estimates that the literary form of *macapat* began to be widely known in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, and it constituted a contemporary form in Javanese literature. *Macapat* follows several poetic constructions, known as *guru gatra* 'the rule of the number of lines per stanza in accordance with the *sekar* pattern', *guru wilangan* 'the rule of the number of syllables per line based on the line position within *sekar*' and *guru lagu* 'the rule of the ending vowel of each line based on the line position within *sekar*'. It also has the rule of recital, which is based on the notation pattern of *sekar*. In addition, each *sekar* pattern has their own distinctive 'thematic' *flavor* or *character*. SJ is a *macapat*-framed literary text consisting of 250 '*pada*' (stanzas) and 47 '*pupuh*' (chapters), which also contains the elements of narrative text. These narrative elements build the cohered story within the text. As a poet laureate, in addition to abdicating himself to the king, Kyai Sarataka also aspired to incorporate his ideas of life in his own works. His classical literary works have been considered timeless masterpiece full of life lessons relevant even up to this day.

## 2. Research Method

Based on the background, this research sets to find the ideas conveyed in SJ, the textual theme of SJ which is framed by the narrative structure and its relations with the teachings of Ki Ageng Suryomentaram. Therefore, the objective of this research is to identify the theme that is then associated with the teachings of Ki Ageng Suryomentaram. This research used the theory examined by Burhan Nurgiyantoro in *Teori Pengkajian Fiksi* (2015) which is then correlated with the teaching of self-introspection by Ki Ageng Suryomentaram. As for the method of this research descriptive analysis is used.

## 3. Results

The SJ manuscript tells the life of a man named Jayengbaya who was daydreaming of taking on 47 different choices in life. Each of his daydream always started with some benefit that he wanted in life. The benefit is of earthly pleasures that satisfy his corporeal desires. The earthly delights include the satisfaction of wealth, lust, power, and/or freedom. Jayengbaya's first life choice is to become *blantik jaran* or 'broker for horses', followed in succession by the desires to become a *gamelan* musician, mask dancer, puppeteer for *wayang purwa* shadow puppet, gambler, drug dealer, tailor, lawyer, robber, prosecutor, servant of the Dutch people, servant of *tledhek* or street dancers, mentally insane, unemployed, widower, polygamous man, be wedded to an aristocratic wife, *rabi ringgit*, being possessed by a demon, blacksmith, casket seller, teacher, powerful *guru*, shaman (clever man), trader, farmer, goldsmith, mosque guardian, beggar, soldier, executioner, *nirbita* soldier, *bentara* or king's assistant, elephant handler, *sarageni* soldier, clerk, *ngindhung* or 'a squatter staying in someone's garden', village chief, merchant, pawnbroker, *blantik kerisor* *keris* trader, *mondhok* 'a squatter staying in someone's home', tramp, dog, God, and lastly, being struck by lightning. The change of options was caused by the fear of not being able to resolve the issues entailing each life choice.

In the midst of his daydreaming, Jayengbaya realized that despite being a high ranking person or a villain, each option still has its risks and dangers. Even when imagining being God, Jayengbaya still felt uncomfortable. That is why he decided to end his life by daydreaming getting struck by lightning. So that he could quickly ended his life without any suffering. But this was still not up to par with his wishes. He was still feeling wretched because he found that his death was a waste. In the end, he decided to return to his actual life, accepting himself for what he is. Based on the synopsis, the plot in the text are straight and progressive. Chronologically, a straight and progressive plot narrates the events in stages from beginning,

middle and end (Burhan, 2015: 213). The SJ manuscript narrates Jayengbaya from the stage of exposition, start of conflict, rising action, climax and up to the resolution. A chronological sequence of events depicted the daydreams of Jayengbaya with the first daydream leading the onset of the second daydream, which was caused by his avoidance of the risks entailing the dream. This occurred again in the second daydream where after satisfying his desires, he would have to face problems, so he switched to other fantasies. This pattern repeats until the 47<sup>th</sup> daydream when he was struck by lightning. In the SJ manuscript's final stage of completion or resolution, Jayengbaya became aware that he did not want to die needlessly by being struck by lightning, and all the pleasures in his daydreams did not correspond with his own needs, therefore he wants to return to his original state. Karsono (1998: 16) stated that classical literary texts generally have chronologically progressive and simple plots. From that statement, it can be said that the context of time when the author writes its work and the context of time that serves as the setting of the classical Javanese literature conforms with each other.

The character that underwent the events in *Serat Jayengbaya* is just Jayengbaya himself. He was the main character of the text. Jayengbaya was facing the conflict with his own self, which is the inner upheaval of deciding what he should do. This inner conflict that occurred resulted in the next conflict in each of his daydreams. The conflict illustrates Jayengbaya as an indecisive character because he continually changed his life choices. He continued to seek work or life choices to only suit his desires. His indecision is apparent at every turn of his work that was due to his incomprehension of the self. Jayengbaya could not resolve the conflict in each of the daydream option. He was just imagining the pleasure he would get from each of his choice. He was not ready to accept the other side of it which was the entailing risk. Jayengbaya did not understand his capacity to live a life that may appease his own self. From this elaboration, Jayengbaya is a rounded character which indicates that there occurred changes to his character until the end of the plot, which is the character who cast doubts upon himself until he became assured of himself.

Overall, the setting that served as the basis to the SJ manuscript includes the location which is in Surakarta. The context of time was when Islam had started to affect the Javanese culture and colonial period. And sociocultural background indicated that celebration of Cap Go Meh has been held. The setting serves as the basis to support the narrative so that other elements of the narrative are a logical relationship with each other to create a complete narrative (Burhan, 2015: 303). From such description, Jayengbaya lived in the area of Java that had been influenced by the various cultures of the newcomers. The life choices in his daydreams were influenced by the culture of the newcomers that were starting to adjust to the Javanese culture. Setting of time in the SJ manuscript were not much noted in the narrative because the common characteristic of classical narrative texts is in their greater focus on characters that live the events. This is to convey and illustrate the meaning of the events through the action of the characters.

From the results of examination and analysis of the narrative structure, it can be generated that the theme that binds the elements of SJ manuscript is the search of identity. The theme of identity search is viewed from the relationships between the elements that compose the system of the narrative's elements of literature. The plot portrays the character, setting and theme of the SJ manuscript. This self-discovery is what moved the events in the narrative, causing mutual connection between the events from which the plot was built from. The straight progressive plot narrates Jayengbaya who continually changed his daydream choices to seek the happiness in life that he wanted. It shows the character of Jayengbaya who was looking for his true self. The changes in his life's daydreams shows that Jayengbaya himself was trying to find satisfaction from the enjoyment of each of his daydreams. He was confused by all of his life choices and his work has always been detrimental. Although he initially obtained his earthly pleasure, the pleasure was only another side of an unfavorable circumstance. From the examination of the synopsis, the character Jayengbaya has tried all sorts of life choices, from a selection of high-status choices of being God,

becoming a wealthy merchant and down to being unemployed and being struck by lightning. However, he continued to experience failure in determining the life choice appropriate for him until he got to the 47<sup>th</sup> choice, which was caused by his indecision about his own self. The confusion he had over his own self was to make way for him to realize his true self.

Self-discovery is not easy to do; to find and to understand what conforms to the personal self. Many factors can affect Jayengbaya's self-doubt aside from his own inner conflict, environmental factors where he lived was also a factor. Many of the new arrivals to Indonesia, particularly in the Java area, affect the cultural life of the Javanese, among others are the Islamic, Netherlands and Chinese cultures. This then influenced Jayengbaya's character; whether he should follow the colony's rules, become part of the government or even choose his own path. The circumstances prompted people like Jayengbaya to firmly determine where he should settle. His search for identity ended after he wholeheartedly accepted his circumstance and realized that whatever work choice or his position in life is, it would not be as beautiful as he had imagined. There is always gain/loss or good/bad sides to everything.

In the SJ manuscript, it can be said that the character Jayengbaya is the embodiment of the author at the time. As has been discussed before that classical literary texts have a congruence between the time of the story and the time when the story was narrated. Therefore, Kyai Sarataka can be said to reflect on his life into his idea. In the days before he produced his first work, there was a transfer of colonial power. Andjar (1980: 52-53) revealed that in the 19th century occurred a succession of power in the Dutch Government due to the policy to take the most advantage of the natives, i.e. the turn from Daendels, Raffles, and Capellen. At the time, the ethnic Chinese have been instructed by the colonial authority to assist the trading activities.

Ranggawarsita descended from Sultan of Pajang which was advised by Sunan Kalijaga, hence the influence of Islam on Ranggawarsita entered into his works, because in order for Islam to be accepted in the Javanese environment, they should be able to adjust to the Javanese culture, and one of the way is through *macapat*. In his youth, Ranggawarsita did not immediately became a royal with commendable traits. He underwent the process to turn himself into a Javanese poet with the eight essential skills. Bagus Burhan which was Ranggawarsita's name in his youth, preferred cockfighting as opposed to studying at Tegal Sari Islamic Boarding School. In the end he realized the abilities he had after going through the series of events in his life and went to conduct a meditative retreat or *tapabrata*. Search of identity can be associated with the state of being introspective, because it also appeared back in the time of Ki Ageng Suryomentaram who revealed his teaching of introspection in 1954. However, he already acquired the awareness to understand the self back in 1927. Ki Ageng Suryomentaram was the 55<sup>th</sup> descendant of Hamengkubuwono VII. The life story of Ki Ageng was similar to the experience of Jayengbaya. Both alike were trying to understand their true self, looking for something that "alive" inside the individual.

Ki Ageng Suryomentaram lived in the royal palace throughout his teenage years, yet he felt like he could not find any zest in life. He felt cooped up in his circumstance of being a prince who is bounded by the palace surroundings. He wanted to give up his title as a prince and conveyed it to HB VIII. However, he was rejected (Sunarto, 2004: 23). Eventually he ventured out of the palace in search for a sense of living that he did not find in the place where he grew up. Ki Ageng went to Cilacap to sell batik cloth and corsets. He then went to Banyumas to become a well digger. But he was disappointed because it was required of him to return to the palace. Ki Ageng conducted fasting or *tirakat* to find the 'person' living in him. When HB VIII became King he could eventually leave the life of the Royal family. Around 1927 he finally found the 'person' he meant. The person was one of full disappointment. The person was Suryomentaram himself. When he was a prince, he felt disappointed. Being a farmer he remained disappointed. When he was scolded, he became disappointed. So as when he was being ruled, he was

disappointed. When he was worshiped, he was also disappointed. Finally he found that the awareness of his own self only needed to be acknowledged, to be monitored. Awareness of the self made him happy because he was able to recognize the 'person' in him. The understanding of one self is indispensable for every individual in order to resolve the difficulties faced in life. The intent of this understanding is to understand his soul, for the soul produces feelings. Such understanding comes with a full comprehension of feelings towards one self to be able to know the true desire in finding the life happiness that one needs. Man consists of body and soul and in this case, the soul is a result of the individual's life attitude. The psychiatric self of every person is the "I", or as mentioned by Ki Ageng Suryomentaram as *Kramadangsa* (Darmanto, 1999: 17).

In understanding the self, one needs to first understand 'idea'. Idea is an aspiration that comes in many forms, but the goal is the same which is to attain happiness (Ki Ageng, 1978: 9). Creating the idea of happiness is not an easy matter, because if one fails to understand, then the idea becomes a mere wishful thinking. The creation of an idea should be preceded by an understanding of one's deficiencies or "the wretched self". Each individual has an ill-fate that must remain supervised; not to be disguised as if it will disappear by itself. One's ill-fate needs to be understood, recognized and accepted, so the happiness that one needs can be found. The individual must be able to resolve every ill-fate through "self-knowledge" or "*pengawikan pribadi*" or self introspection. One's search for identity is required to attain the state of being introspective of one's self. With self introspection, an individual can experience an awareness of the self. One can even manage the role of the "I" so as not to be too overpowered by ego. Jayengbaya had difficulty in finding his true identity because he has not fully understood "*pengawikan pribadi*". He underwent the process to acquire such understanding by going through the 47 kinds of life choices in his daydreams. Jayengbaya still involved a big ego in the search of his life's necessity because he still used his corporeal body or the five senses to conduct the search. If it still fully involves the senses, then the "I" can still take hold of the individual's will. In the case of Jayengbaya, he tried to find pleasure, the pleasures he acquired from each of his life choice was enjoyed as much as possible. The pleasures of reckless spending of wealth, bragging his status, being cunning to achieve more pleasure, up to the pleasure of being unemployed; Jayengbaya often worried about the ill-fate that might occur afterwards. He feared tracing the "ill-fate" within himself because he was afraid of facing risks.

Every individual surely experience the process of being indecisive in discovering the truth that should she have been contained in the self. With self introspection, the individual can pass through the process of indecisiveness in a well manner, because one can then control the inner turmoil which is influenced by the environment. The happiness that each individual thinks of is to find the true peace that suits the circumstances of each individual. Self introspection clarifies the self-discovery. Ki Ageng reaffirms this by explicitly mentioning about self introspection. Although the actual discovery of identity has already been amply depicted in the SJ manuscript, the problem of identity search is indeed often experienced by young kids aged around 25 years old. In order not to get caught up in any misunderstanding of one's ability and circumstance, the self introspection is a way to find the true self.

#### 4. Discussions

The structural analysis of SJ manuscript started from the elements of plot, character, setting, and then ended with the theme. These elements have the kind of attachment that affects each other. Thus, the character of Jayengbaya experienced a search of his identity which is the primary meaning of the manuscript that binds the whole story. Ki Ageng provides explicit message of the meaning contained in Ranggawarsita's first work, namely by giving teachings on self introspection which is required for one to discover the self, so that the person knows the purpose of their life. Understanding of the purpose of life is highly necessary because if one finds it hard to acquire such understanding then there can arise a sense of



blame to the self and the feeling of being an imperfect person. Jayengbaya often worried about the ill-fate that might happen to him. What is truly wanted and needed by the self is a happiness that turns into the purpose of human life, because life arises from the feelings coming from the soul of each human being. The same goes for one's search for identity, self-searching man like Jayengbaya needs to track down the true self that is in need of the things suitable for the self.

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