

# Javanese Sex Spirituality on *Serat Nitimani* Written by Raden Harya Suganda (1887 AD)

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## ABSTRACT

This paper unfolds sexual spirituality in *Serat Nitimani* written by Raden Harya Suganda (1887 AD). The Javanese sex spirituality in *Serat Nitimani* is specifically reflected on the spiritual concept of *sangkan paraning dumadi* (God) and *manunggaling kawula gusti* in sexual activities. Sexual intercourse that is generally pursuing biological pleasure by fulfilling the impulse of lust and sexual desire is refined into a concept of "intercourse with God" so that resulting in obtaining the "true feeling" and the "essence of feeling". The data were collected through documentation method done by examining the text of *Serat Nitimani*. The collected data were then interpreted through inter-text studies covering Javanese and Islamic spiritual perspectives. The findings of this study showed that the spirituality of Javanese sex in *Serat Nitimani* brings humans to the nature of knowledge, which is, knowing and uniting with God through sexual intercourse. This knowledge turns humans into the real human being through *man 'arafa nafsahu faqod 'arafa rabbahu* (whoever knows himself, he has known his god).

**Keywords:** sexual spirituality, *Serat Nitimani*, *manunggaling kawula gusti*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Sex is one of the strongest instincts possessed by every human being [1]. For this reason, sexual needs are as important as other instinctive needs such as clothing, food and shelter. Due to its character as instinctive biological need, [2], [3] sexual activity becomes taboo and is rarely discussed in a sacred spiritual context, not like other human activities such as prayer. Most researches address sexuality in a reductive manner, linking it to the themes of biological action [4][5] gender [6], [7] and the furthest is to the concept of power, [8] they do not view it as a sacred activity. In fact, sexual activity is a manifestation of god's characteristic named *Al-Khaliq* in humans to preserve human life [9].

*Piwulang Jawa* (Javanese teaching) emphasized that sexual activity aside from being pure and sacred instinct also became a concept of *paraning dumadi* (the nature of human creation) beginning with the existence of sexual activity which must be shown to God for judgment [10]. In other words, genitals are sacred mandates containing the meaning of God's essence. Thus, anyone uses his/her genital to get biological pleasure without Sharia rules means that he/she has committed treason to God [11]. So that having sex spiritually leads a person to become a perfect human being who understands himself and his God.

This paper aims to find out the other side of sex which has been generally understood as biological behavior. In this context, *Serat Nitimani* by R. Harya Suganda 1887 AD is taken as the material object as possessing coherence in the process of finding new interpretations of sex spirituality.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

The main data of this study is the text of *Serat Nitimani* of R. Harya Suganda 1887 AD which were collected through documentation techniques. The text is interpreted hermeneutically using the theory of sexual spirituality in Islamic perspective.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. *Serat Nitimani* and Its Scope

*Serat Nitimani* was written by R. Harya Suganda in 1887 AD. He is a descendant of Mangkunegaran Surakarta, who at that time was the regent in Pasuruan. *Serat Nitimani* is a Javanese sex book containing text in the form of dialogue between a young man (*juru patanya*) and his teacher (*sang murwengita*) on how to acquire the perfection of knowledge and visibility of the real world through sex teaching (*piwulang*) for someone who wants to start marriage life.

*Serat Nitimani* consists of 32 chapters. In each chapter, there are sub-chapters as follows: first, *manggala*, which is the introduction of the author. Second, proverbs containing advice to everyone who reads the book. Third, *piwulang* (tenets) on how to choose a future wife. Fourth, *piwulang* on bad women who will cause misery in marriage life. Fifth, *piwulang* on the techniques to treat wife physically and mentally. Sixth, *piwulang* on techniques of sexual

intercourse between husband and wife. Seventh, *piwulang* on the origin of human semen. Eighth, *piwulang* on *Betal Mukadas* which is an explanation of God's substance placed on the testicles of man.

Ninth, *piwulang* on the *dalil*, *hadits*, *ijmak* and *qiyas* as well as *wisikan ananing dat* (whispers about the existence of *dzat*). Tenth, *piwulang wedharan wahaning dat* (the presence of *dzat*). Eleventh, *piwulang* "bayan alip" book containing a comparison with the book of "Wirid Hidayat Jati". Twelfth, *piwulang gelaran kahananing dat* telling the existence of God's substance on the results of sexual intercourse. Thirteenth, *piwulang* on *Betal Makmur* explaining that fetus is the work of God that must be accounted before God. Fourteenth, *piwulang* on *Betal Mukaram* which is God's prohibition places. Fifteenth, *piwulang* on the spread of Arabic science on the island of Java. Sixteenth, *piwulang panetep santosaning iman* (the determination of the tranquility of faith), which is the procedure for living life based on God's will. Seventeenth, *piwulang* of martyrdom exposing sexual activity as the first means of the birth of a human being (*sangkan paraning dumadi*). Eighteenth, *piwulang* on male and female genitals as a sacred mandate from God and its relation to the concept of *sangkan paraning dumadi*. Nineteenth, *piwulang* on women ethics during intercourse. Twenty, *piwulang* on prohibition for woman from asking a shaman to perpetuate her partner's love. Twenty-first, *piwulang* on main behaviors and makrifat knowledge.

Twenty second, *piwulang* on the formation of a baby in the womb. Twenty third, *piwulang* on knowledge and appreciation practice to unite the mind with God. Twenty fourth, *piwulang* on body behavior in sexual intercourse. Twenty fifth, the technique of copulating. Twenty sixth, *piwulang* on intercourse technique with intermediate behavior (*laku madya*). Twenty seventh, *piwulang* on the main practice and knowledge of perfection which includes: the *Syariat* (which is in physical knowledge), the *Tarekat* (which is in-heart knowledge), the *Hakekat* (which is in the knowledge of life) and the *Makrifat* (which is in the knowledge of *rahsa* journey). Twenty eighth, *piwulang* physical action and spiritual purity in the spiritual journey through the tale of three birds. Twenty ninth, *piwulang* on the appreciation and *tapa brata* (meditation) performed by *jedhung* caterpillar and a snake. Thirtieth, *piwulang* on *panca driya* (silence in the center of the mind or the human mind) and *panca maya* (five pseudo things in human life). Thirty first, *piwulang* on *manunggaling kawula gusti*. Thirty-second, closing.

### 3.2. Sexual Intercourse as the Top of Spirituality; Serat Nitimani Perspective

Comprehending sexuality on the spiritual viewpoint is not easy, that is because the common sense of sex is biological relationship [12][13]. Meanwhile, the object of spiritual study is coning toward appreciation of life in its relationship with God regardless of the teachings of any religions [14]. In the context of Islam, spirituality means something that refers to anything related to the spirit world, close to god, containing mysticism aspects and interiority that are equated with the core of things. This makes the terms of sexuality

and spirituality look like in the opposite direction. In fact, sex and spirituality in the context of knowing self and God, also the efforts to unite one self with God are an inseparable part.

The construction of sexual spirituality in *Serat Nitimani* is loaded with aspects of physical, psychological, and spiritual teachings. Some of these aspects form an integrated model of sexual spirituality construction that eventually ends with the origin of human life and self-union with God. The subject is explained as follows:

*Sejatine ing sun nata malige ana ing sajroning betal mukadas iku omah enggoning pasucian ing sun, jumeneng ana kontholing Adam, kang ana sajroning konthol iku pringsilan, kang ana ing sajroning pringsilan niku nutfah ya iku mani, sajroning mani iku madi, sajroning madi iku manikem, sajroning manikem iku rahsa, sajroning rahsa iku ing sun, ora ana pangeran ya iku ing sun, dad kang anglimputi ing kahanan jati jumeneng ana ing sajroning nukat gaib, tumurun dadi johar awal, ing kono wahananing alam akadiyat, alam wahdat, alam wakhidiyat, alam arwah, alam misal, alam ajsam, alam insan kamil. (Serat Nitimani, Pupuh 8).*

(Verily, I put My throne in *Betal Mukadas*. That is My sanctity which is in Adam's penis. Whereas in the penis there is testicles, in the testicles there is semen, in the semen there is sperm, in the sperm there is *madi*, in the *madi* there is *Manikem*, in *Manikem* there is *rahsa*, in *rahsa* there is Me, the all-encompassing *dzat*, enthroned in the unseen world).

The description above confirms that male genital is a mandate and one of the manifestations of God's existence. Aziz called it the essence of God [11]. So that every human is only allowed to use genitals in accordance with God's law. Because sexual intercourse becomes a medium to understand the concept of *saran paraning dumadi* (the origin of human life) emanated from God.

The aforementioned points were supported by Ronggowarsito in *Serat Wirid Hidayat Jati* as follows: first, God truly has transcendental power emanated into humans (*kawula*). Through that emanation, immersed recognition that human radiates (*katitipan*) *Dzat Jati* from within. The essence of life that comes from sexual intercourse between men and women is none other than radiating the Essence of God from the centrifugal point to the mondial realm. The Essence of God experiences emanation through the process of disguising (*jagad walikan*), animating the *kawula* as its *warana af'al* (veil).

Secondly, the emanation process mentions God as the origin of mankind (*titah*). The process of God's *tajali* into humans occurs through the dignity of seven, stating that God is emitted in the human race. This context of emanation is in line with the merging of pantheism, meaning that humans are part of the essence of God with monism, meaning that God dwells (*lenggah*) inside humans.

Thirdly, the embodiment of God's essence into human beings both in the form of fate or hidden face manifests the completeness of life for the *kawula* (myself) to be able to carry out the life process. Fourthly, the completeness of human life is a veil of *ingsun* (Me) emanating inside human being. *Ingsun* who *lenggah* in the inner kingdom (*mahligai*) of a human will give him life perfection. God's *jumeng* (stay) inside human being are in three *mahligai* namely the head (*guru loka* or *bait al - Makmur*), breast (*endra loka* or *bait al - muharram*) and genitals (*jana loka - bait al -*

*mukaddas*). Each part contains six elements and each part always has an element of *rahsa* as the essence of god who surrounds human life. The three sacred parts of *Mahligai* in human beings consist of the Three Realms (*Triloka*). In *Triloka*, *Ingsun* builds *mahligai* and moves people's lives.

To be able to recognize self and be fully united (*manunggal*) with God, sex must be based on constant *dhikr* (prayer). In this context, *Dhikr* as the practice of *tarekat* means that sexual intercourse should be done through several stages, namely the pre-intercourse stage, the intercourse stage, and concluding stage.

In the pre-intercourse stage, *Serat Nitimani* requires a person to perform a procession of bathing and hairwashing (*jamah*) using *kembang setaman* (assorted flowers) and spelling a mantra or prayer to God, and after that wear attractive clothes, this procedure should be done again after the intercourse. Next, the husband puts on *Aji Kamajaya* to cultivate a pure intention, opens *Aji Asmaranala* (inner charm, cheerful heart, happy and accepting) or love lust, opens *Aji Asmaratura* (visual charm: looking at the beauty of the partner's face), *Aji Asmaraturida* (charm of hearing: listening to the request of the partner), *Aji Asmaranada* (the smellung charm: preparation for kissing) and finally opens *Aji Asmaragama* (love charm).

The spiritual dimension at this stage implies that the body of a partner and the semen coming out of the genitals of men and women are not considered *najis* (unclean) that the bodies must be purified. However, both are required to purify themselves because men and women will unite as *manunggal* with God symbolized in each bodies. Women are considered an emanation form of God for men, and vice-versa, men are for women. Thus, achieving a single unity between human and God through sexual intercourse. Honors to *Sang Hyang Utapatra* or *Sang Hyang Dembira* as the guardian of the *mustika* of ultimate pleasure must also be the basis of self-purifying before the intercourse.

The unity between *kawula* and *gusti* in this context is based on the profound teachings of pantheism, i.e. the unity between oneself and God in the forms of various creations. Besides that, men take an obligatory bath for giving respect to the descending process of *Johar*, water of living or sperm that falls into the womb which will later become the creation of a caliph by God.

At the stage of intercourse, one can find true identity and be united with God if the process is carried out through deep appreciation, caution, patience, and optimizing the unification of the mind with feeling.

*Lamun tandhing, marsudya ing tyas ening, namrih ering, kang supadi tan kajungking. Yen anglaras, panggagas aja sampun kabrangan, dimen awas, ing pamawas datan tiwas. Lamun cuwa, sampun kawiscareng netya, wrananana, ing suka dhanganing karsa, kang supadya, datan manggih dirgama. Lamun gela, jroning nala sampu daga, sengadiya, langkung condong ing wardaya, pamrihira, kang pinanduk tan legawa. (Serat Nitimani, Pupuh 2)*

The text above suggests that concentration during sexual intercourse is like the practice of meditation so that the pleasure of sex can be achieved like that of *dhikr*. Being cautious and vigilant during penetration trains the spirituality to always be careful of the temptations of demons that tend to direct us to act arbitrarily in the process of penetration. Dissatisfaction with the partner's sexual plays is not the end

of everything. This suggests that patience is the main weapon in controlling dissatisfactions. Rushing in sexual intercourse is not a good thing to do. To rush means not to have good control. Moreover, the process of intercourse as a medium for meeting and being united with God requires several main practices.

The above process, borrowing the Endraswara's terminology, is a stage of achieving a true feeling, which needs mystic behaviors as follow: a) *heneng*, holding the release of *rahsa* longer, calm so that one will get a long-lived semen later. b) *hening*, more solemn in intercourse, so it is more enjoyable and useful. This taste will clear or purify *Wiji* (the seeds/the sperm), his/her child will later be intelligent. c) cautious, always caring, fulfilling the desires of the partner and be able to follow his/her expectations. d) *eling* means always remembering the creator, remembering that he is carrying out holy *jihad* (battle) and remembering that he is performing a worship [15]. This matter leads people to know the secrets of life, the secrets of sexual intercourse and the secrets of human relations with God along with the opening of the veil of mystery. So that through this stage a person is truly able to become a real human being.

The veil of mystery is proved by a woman experiencing a phase of pregnancy. It is impossible for women to conceive without God's intervention. Semen is merely a medium, while God has the sole role of creating humans through that media.

*Yen priya lan wanita anggenipun sami sahesmi pamudharin prasa sesarengan, woring kama mangka pinareng dening Pangeran Kang Maha Mulya badhe nitahaken manungsa, punika woring kuma wau lajeng kendel dumunung wonten guwa garbaning wanita, binasakaken garbini inggih punika meteng (Serat Nitimani, Pupuh 8)*

The above-concept takes someone to the *maqam* (level) of *ma'rifat* i.e. to recognize, feel and meet with God through the results of His creation (birth of babies). The *ma'rifat* of a person in the concept of sex spirituality makes him/her think more, feel and at the same time the increasing quality of his faith with *makrifat* towards his creation.

Therefore, the sexual spirituality in *Serat Nitimani* is divided into phases of *tarekat*, *hakekat* and *makrifat* toward God as the sole creator and ruler. This leads to the understanding that sex is spiritually separated from the idea of genital intercourse between men and women. However, the meaning of sex becomes the essence of knowledge about the origin of human creation, knowing oneself, to establishing transcendental relationships through self-unification with God.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The creation of a true human being who has a true feeling and the essence of feeling is obtained through a united sexual intercourse with God. The spiritual attitude of being one with God becomes the greatest power to give birth to great and mighty caliphs. It is therefore not strange, if ascetics, clerics, and kings give birth to great descendants. Because, the "seeds" or genes that are planted are monitored and selected directly by God through the planter's *riyadah* and *mujahadah*. In this case, the bad luck of a descendant

begins with the process of intercourse that done without being unified with God. So, that the power of demon is more dominant to give birth to a generation of demon hearts.

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