

# Social Critics of Raden Ngabehi Ranggawarsita in Javanese Literature

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**Abstract**—The creation of literary works, both oral and written, aims to inform leaders, women; as social critics; advice to the community to do good or as a social control. A famous, creative, criticizing and innovative poet in the creation or writing of Javanese literature is Raden Ngabehi Ranggawarsita, the last poet of Surakarta Hadiningrat Palace. The location of this research is in the city of Surakarta where there is a palace of Kasunanan and Pura Mangkunegaran, there are still old texts stored in 3 (three) libraries: Sanapustaka (Surakarta palace), Reksapustaka (Mangkunegaran), and Radyapustaka (Sriwedari). The main data of this research are the manuscripts of Serat Jayengbaya, Kalatidha, and Serat Jaka Lodhang written by R.Ng. Ranggawarsita,. Data collection techniques are inventorying manuscripts through catalogs and checking directly to the location, transliteration and text translation, also analysis of manuscripts. The research method is qualitative descriptive, which is the writing is revealed, analyzed and interpreted in qualitative terms, the analysis cannot be measured by statistics because the data are in the form of words or the world in words (Winarno Surakhmad, 1980: 61); especially texts which contain social criticism. Secondary data in the form of oral literature or traditional Javanese expressions that contain social criticism. Raden Ngabehi Ranggawarsita's social criticism conveyed in his writings are: (a) many people are not grateful for God's gift in the field of work; described in Serat Jayengbaya. (b) Leaders, subordinates and people do not want to consult and no one wants to budge; so that the problems of the nation and state are difficult to be resolved (in Serat Kalatidh). (c). Many people because their lives are only oriented to money, property and women; so that they are full of plays and deception for the benefit of themselves and their groups (in Serat Jaka Lodhang).

**Keywords:** Critics, social, manuscript, old literature, control, poet, Ranggawarsita.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Raden Ngabehi Ranggawarsita was the last poet of Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat Palace, and was known for being a down-to-earth, active, creative and innovative one in creating works. He had created a great number of various works, either those of literature or the contents. One of his most renowned and closest works of literature to every person's heart is *Serat Kalatidha*, containing social criticism in addition to providing portrayal of a world full of uncertainty, deception, chaos, and calamities. Therefore, one must always *eling* (remember, dhikr) to God and *waspada* (being vigilant, careful, wise); to pursue a peaceful and happy life. This is described in Stanza 7 (seven) of Javanese traditional Macapat song *Sinom*, as follows.

*"Amenangi jaman edan/ ewuh aya ing pambudi/ melu edan nora tahan/ yen tan melu anglakoni/ boya kaduman melik/ kaliren wekasanipun/ dilalah kersa Allah/ begja-begjane kang lali/ luwih beja kang eling lawan waspada//"*

Trans.: Experiencing a chaotic world makes it difficult to think and act. If imitating and following those insane people whose acts are only wrapped up in themselves, it just does not feel right or appropriate. But if not following them, one won't get the shares of the treasure/booty war or be deceived and get starved, instead. We should be grateful for God's blessings. Even though we get the share (of money, gifts), forgetting God makes us tangled in deception. Those who "always remember God and be vigilant as well as careful in doing any deeds are more fortunate."

The excerpts taken from the poem constitute social criticism towards one's behavior that tends to be wrapped up in herself, illustrating those mad people who fight for obtaining money or wealth by any necessary means, without considering whether it is legal or not as long as they reach their goals and fulfill their needs. This description relates to the current situation of our society in which there are so many people who are distant or forgetting God (goodness, truth, nobility), inclined to follow their own desires (greedy) and to take others' possession (by stealing or doing corruption). This proves that a work of literature was born, created and emerging within society as it was inspired and based on the real portrait of its relevant era. It was not merely present without any meaning nor it just fell from the sky. Thus, motivations for creating a work of literature are for many interests and objectives, namely for providing advice, social criticism, prohibition, suggestions or supervision to the people, in addition to being a social control, etc.

The poet Raden Ngabehi Ranggawarsita in presenting and expressing his social criticism through scripts in Javanese was in the attempt to evaluate and correct such values or conducts which deviated from the actual rules, be it symbolically or transparently, delicately or roughly. Such social criticism must be viewed and understood as part of Javanese culture, which is 'self-introspection' or as a manifestation of *urun rembug* (proposing an idea in a discussion) by the poet of people to the rulers or

leaders, so that in performing their tasks and duties they won't be arbitrary, bossy, arrogant, against the rules, corrupted, or harming their people.

## II. THEORETICAL REVIEW

Social criticism is meant to position, conduct evaluation, research or study on society to its proper places, putting social rights and dignity which are noble and right, away from any deviation or misuse of authority (Darusuprta, 1984).

Raden Ngabehi Ranggawarsita since 1832 AD dalam *Serat Jayengbaya* once criticized someone who was always not grateful nor satisfied to God's blessings or gifts; depicting him as someone who always changed jobs until 7 kinds of job because of afraid of taking any risks, whereas, there are always good (fun) and bad (difficulty) in every job. In *Serat Kalatidha* (1838 AD), the poet Ranggawarsita also criticized the rulers, people's representatives and people who did not want to be united. There is even an opinion that *Serat Kalatidha* is the depiction of an era/time full of uncertainty; full of calamities, riots, dangers and calamities. This is suitable with the title of the work itself, *kalatidha*; *kala* means time or era; *tidha* means to be in doubt, uncertain (Kamajaya, 1980). It means an era or time which is full of disasters, calamities, riots and is cursed by God.

In *Serat Jaka Lodhang* by R. Ng. Ranggawarsita, in one of stanzas there also contains social criticism, towards the current condition in which there are many people who do not act accordingly, full of pretense and deception and artificial fake (Kamajaya, 1980).

## III. METHODOLOGY

Data source of this paper are *Serat Jayengbaya*, *Kalatidha* dan *Serat Jaka Lodhang* by Raden Ngabehi Ranggawarsita. Research data are social criticism texts contained in *Serat: Jayengbaya*, *Kalatidha*, dan *Jaka Lodhang*. Data collection technique used was qualitative, by describing and revealing data which were still in forms if poetic (flowery) language (Macapat traditional songs); thus, need expressing and explaining in prose language to be easily understood.

## IV. DISCUSSION

The last poet of Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat Palace, Raden Ngabehi Ranggawarsita, in writing Javanese scripts and creating works of literature or poetry aimed to give advice to children, grandchildren or family, and younger generations; or to serve as social criticism, and so on. The following is the written old literature text (script) by the poet containing social criticism, about:

### 1. Someone who is not grateful to God

Raden Ngabehi Ranggawarsita criticized someone or society who had never thanked God for His gift, for example working not seriously, being unprofessional and not wanting to work on a difficult one and not wanting to take risks; even though every job there must be likes (fun) and sorrow (sad or risk). It was described in *Serat Jayengbaya*, the song of macapat *Asmaradana*; namely the main character Jayengbaya who often changed jobs. The first job he did was to become a blantik jaran 'buying and selling horses' (verses 2 - 8), then become niyaga or 'gamelan player' (verses 9-18); because when you become a blantik jaran, the profits are very large and also very risky if the horse is still wild; also when falling from a horse's back, the head can be covered in blood. He then turned into a gamelan musician, who turned out to be also full of risks because if he cannot present the request of the audience, they will pelt him with liquor that can hit the head until it comes out of the blood, and *beling* (bottle shards) can also stick in the eye which causes blindness. Jayengbaya then decided to become a mask dancer, and so on. He always changes jobs. Finally Jayengbaya felt desperate in facing life and work; so he wants to be The God (Gusti Allah) (verses 245 - 247).

### 2. The Rulers, People's Representatives, and People Who Do Not Want to Be United

In 19<sup>th</sup> century, precisely in 1838 AD, the great poet Raden Ngabehi Ranggawarsita in *Serat Kalatidha* once criticized the rules, representatives of the people and the people themselves who were separated and did not want to be united. There is even an opinion that *Serat Kalatidha* is the depiction of an era/time full of uncertainty; full of calamities, riots, dangers and calamities. Such social criticism is expressed in Stanza 2 (two) of *Serat Kalatidha* below, saying:

*"Ratune ratu utama/ patihe patih linuwih/ pra nayaka tyas raharja/ panekare becik-becik/ parandene tan dadi/ paliyasing kalabendu/ malah mangkin andadra/ rubeda kang ngreribedi/ beda-beda hardaning wong sanagara/".*

Trans. : "The King or Leader are good, the Deputy (as his Vice) is also better (more powerful, cleverer), the people's representatives have good heart (honest), the employee work diligently, seriously and properly. However, why can't prosperity, welfare and justice be realized yet, and God curses, instead? Disasters and calamities occur increasingly, and they come one after another. This happens because our national spirit of united and unitary is degrading, the citizen from common people to those of upper class do not want to give way to others; everyone is so persistent and has his/her own will."

The previous Stanza 2 of *macapat* song, *Sinom*, if studied carefully, is highly interesting; since in Stanza 1 to 4, the poet depicted the good points of the rulers along with their apparatus and employees, while in Stanza 5 to 9 he depicted the

contradictory situation, in which the national ideals of becoming such a just, prosperous, equal, and united country for the people's welfare, was apparently not realized. It was proven by how the country always dealt with chaotic situations; sequential calamities; people of many islands of provinces that always wanted to separate themselves from the country; the government and the member of house of representatives who did not want to be united and always want to defeat their political opposition, ignorant of the fate of their constituents who had given them the mandate and elected them. And so were the people. They tended to act at their own will, being arbitrary in making judgment over a certain case, and ignoring religious, state, and customary law. With that said, the country was always in the state of concerned, due to the spirit of *rumangsa andarbeni lan wajib ambelani* "feeling of having the country and the obligation to defend it," *sepi ing pamrih rame ing gawe*, "work hard with big hearts (sincerely)," which were declining, fading away, and left behind. As a result, there flourished everywhere such feeling of envy towards others, violence, brutality, and greed, in addition to tyranny.

### 3. There are Many Mad People Taking Others' Rights and Property, also forget The God

In the present era of chaos, mad people can be found in any corner of the world, referring to those who do any deeds at his own will without feeling any guilty nor sin. Religious, state, and customary law are not obeyed and violated, instead, for gaining personal profit only, be it by doing fraud, forgery, deception, murder, or corruption. Feeling of ashamed is no longer there, and pride is replaced by material wealth. We shall not feel proud of being rich from the results of committing crime, deception, or fraud (corruption). We shall not be lured and enchanted by any richness that is of unclear origin, and we must always remember God and be vigilant or careful in doing any deeds. This social criticism is expressed in *Serat Kalatidha* by Raden Ranggawarsita, verse 7 (seven), as described above, nowadays many people are greedy, accustomed to taking the rights of others, and far from God. Whereas a lucky and happy life can be obtained if someone who is always close to God, always *eling lan waspada*; always remember and try to be close to The God, and be careful or wise in doing any deed.

Such social criticisms were expressed in the *Serat Kalatidha* by Raden Ranggawarsita in Stanza 7, saying the following:

*"Amenangi jaman edan/ ewuh aya ing pambudi/ melu edan nora tahan/ yen tan melu anglakoni/ boya kaduman melik/ kaliren wekasanipun/ dilalah kersa Allah/ begja-begjane kang lali/ luwih beja kang eling lawan waspada//"*

Trans: Experiencing a chaotic world makes it difficult to think and act. If imitating and following those insane people whose acts are only wrapped up in themselves, it just does not feel right or appropriate. But if not following them, one won't get the shares of the treasure/booty war or be deceived and get starved, instead. We should be grateful for God's blessings. Even though we get the share (of money, gifts), forgetting God makes us tangled in deception. Those who "always remember God and be vigilant as well as careful in doing any deeds are more fortunate."

### 4. Being in Pretense, Fraud, Materialistic

In *Serat Joko Lodhang pupuh II* traditional Javanese *macapat* song, *Sinom in Stanza 2 (two)*, Ranggawarsita also criticized those who were behaving in pretense, referring to those who looked pious (good) from the outer appearance or shell, yet truly were fake. There had been many *ulema* (Islamic teachers) who fond of committing "*ma lima*," the 5 (five) sins, (consuming drugs, gambling, drinking alcohol, flirting/having affairs or being womanizer, and stealing); there were many girls who lost their virginity due to pursuing their worldly needs and luxury (wealth), and their goal in this life was only to pursue wealth (material richness) and tend to put aside spiritual needs and quality. This really happens in our current society, in which there have been many religion-based political parties and in which the members are *ulema* (religious figures), yet in making decision and policies, they often show any dispute or physical conflict with other members, with no one wants to yield. Consequently, there arises opposition party, splitting harmony and unity, as results of the war over position, power, and money. The standard of success in one's life is merely based on wealth, money, and material richness.

Such criticism can be found in the following lyrics:

*"Wong alim-alim pulasan/ njaba putih njero kuning/ ngulama mangsah maksiat/ madat madon minum main/ kaji-kaji ambanting/ dulbankethu putih mamprung/ wadon nir wadonira/ prabaweng salaka rukmi/ kabeh-kabeh mung marono tingalira//"*

Trans.: "There are those admitting to be bright in religious teachings but truly are fake or fraud, looking good (pure, white) on their appearance but dark inside (yellow, bad). Experts of Islamic teachings violate God's prohibitions by committing "*ma lima*: *madat, main, minum, madon, maling*" (the 5 sins): consuming drugs, gambling, drinking alcohol, flirting and being womanizer, and stealing. The hajj people leave their religious clothes. The girls lose their virginity as they are influenced by silver and gold (worldly luxury). Everyone pursues worldly affairs (wealth, money) in his life. There are only a few who attempt to be closing in on God.

## V. CONCLUSION

Raden Ngabehi Ranggawarsita's social criticism in Javanese literary works (old manuscripts) was still relevant and actual to be applied in community life, nation and state. Can be used as social control, community supervision, and one of the motivations in order to uphold the rule of law, and to defend truth and justice. The social criticism conveyed by the poet is expressed symbolically (covertly), and is transparent; some are smooth and rough. Ranggawarsita's poet's criticism contains: (a)

Someone who is not grateful to God; (b) Authorities, representatives of the people, and people who do not want to unite; tend to obey their own will; (c) Many people are greedy and fighting over the property of others, and far from God; and (d) Humans do a lot of pretending acts, also are still happy to do "*ma lima*" and fraud or has materialistic spirit.

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